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**GENERAL GEORGE C. MARSHALL:  
STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND  
THE CHALLENGES OF RECONSTITUTING  
THE ARMY, 1939-41**

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**JOHN T. NELSEN II**

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The author analyzes General George C. Marshall's performance as Army Chief of Staff from the perspective of strategic leadership. During this pre-World War II period (1939-41), Marshall played a pivotal role in rebuilding and remodeling the Army from its deteriorated interwar condition. Marshall began his tour of duty at a time when the Army was isolated politically and institutionally, when it was profoundly undermanned and poorly equipped, and when the prospects for improving this dismal situation were far from encouraging. This report captures the magnitude of Marshall's achievements in "reconstituting" the Army and in enabling it to enter a major conflict with a greater degree of military preparedness than previously accomplished in our history.

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## FOREWORD

The study of strategic leadership as a formal, analytical concept is relatively new. Therefore, concrete, historical examples of leaders who have wrestled with the width and breadth of strategic-level challenges are of inestimable value. Such examples not only help to enrich the general understanding of the concept, but also inoculate the associated discussions against becoming overly abstract, esoteric, or idealistic.

In this connection, the study of General George C. Marshall, covering his pre-World War II service as Army Chief of Staff, 1939-41, is as inspirational as it is illustrative. Marshall began his tour of duty at a time when the Army was isolated politically and institutionally, when it was profoundly undermanned and poorly equipped, and when the prospects for improving this dismal situation were far from encouraging. In the ensuing 2 1/2 years, the Army's posture changed dramatically for the better, largely through Marshall's Herculean efforts to prepare for the kind of war he saw threatening on the horizon. In effect, he "reconstituted" the Army. It is no exaggeration to say that Marshall enabled America to enter the war with a distinct "running start" in terms of military preparedness—something this country had never before succeeded in doing.

Marshall's contributions were no accident of history. They resulted from the exercise of effective strategic leadership, consciously and consistently applied across a broad spectrum of activities and interests. This study analyzes the nature and effects of that leadership and captures the magnitude of Marshall's achievements as a strategic leader during what were frequently regarded as the unglamorous prewar years.

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Major General, U.S. Army  
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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

George C. Marshall formally assumed the duties of Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, on September 1, 1939. Earlier that same day, Germany had invaded Poland, triggering war in Europe. Marshall subsequently served over 6 grueling years as Chief of Staff, becoming a popular American hero for his role in the war effort. Winston Churchill's praise of him as "the true organizer of victory" for the Allies has found an enduring resonance over the years. Intuitively, he remains regarded as one of the greatest strategic leaders of this century. In this connection, his performance during the war years, 1942 to 1945 in particular, gets by far the bulk of historical attention for obvious reasons.

Yet, his actions during the prewar years, 1939 to 1941, offer equally valuable insights into the exercise of strategic leadership in a democratic society. The challenges Marshall faced in 1939 seemed monumental. In later years, Marshall himself admitted that the prewar years were his toughest. As he assumed his new duties, he felt an urgent need for massive improvement in the Army's preparedness to conduct modern, mobile warfare. He could easily imagine that America might eventually be drawn into a European war, as it had been in 1917. The U.S. Army in 1939 ranked 17th in the world in size, consisting of slightly more than 200,000 Regular Army soldiers and slightly less than 200,000 National Guardsmen—all organized in woefully understrength and undertrained formations. The Army possessed only 329 crude light tanks and only a handful of truly modern combat aircraft within a total inventory of just over 1800 planes. It was a force equipped with the leftover weapons, materiel, and doctrine of the last war. It had a grossly overage officer corps, in which advancement was largely a function of seniority. Captains, for example, were usually in their late thirties or early forties.

War-related industries were infinitesimal. Congress and the public were united in their staunch opposition to any increased military expenditures or involvements abroad. The mood of the country was distinctly isolationist. Extremely sensitive to this mood, President Roosevelt was very reluctant to sponsor sizable military increases. The potential political costs were too great. Against this political backdrop, Marshall was a relatively unknown and uninfluential figure in Washington. As Deputy Chief of Staff (October 1938-June 1939) and as Acting Chief of Staff (July-August 1939), he had appeared before Congress several times and had interacted with the President from a distance. But he had acquired no real personal leverage to shape the larger issues which confronted him. Roosevelt had appointed him on the recommendations of others; thus, Marshall had to start almost from scratch to build a working relationship with the President.<sup>1</sup>

The situation inside the War Department painted an equally unpleasant picture. The Secretary of War, Harry Woodring, was in a continual feud with his primary civilian assistant, Louis Johnson, who coveted his boss' job. With strong political influence of his own, Johnson felt his position completely secure; at the same time, he thought he had already secured assurances of being Woodring's eventual successor. The two seldom agreed on anything, and Marshall was caught squarely in the middle of this dysfunctional situation. The War Department had great difficulty speaking with a single voice on any issue. Marshall walked a tightrope to keep from alienating either man. At the same time, the War Department was locked into an antiquated organizational setup by long-standing congressional legislation. With multiple, semi-independent power centers and no clear coordinating authority below that of the Chief of Staff personally, the Department's structure was fundamentally inefficient, unresponsive, and ponderous in decision making and in following up on matters.

By the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Army's overall situation had changed dramatically for the better. By then, over 1.4 million men were serving in the Army, organized into 36 divisions and 64 air groups. War industries were in high gear, making America the "arsenal of democracy."

The Army as a whole was experienced in army and corps-level maneuvers, well along the way in preparing for mobile warfare. The officer corps had been invigorated. A selective service system was in place. America's leaders had made great strides in laying the foundation for wartime strategy, and the War Department had been reorganized to run more efficiently and effectively.

Marshall cannot be credited solely for these accomplishments; however, his role was pivotal at the highest levels of government, in the halls of the War Department, and in the field. He emerged with enormous influence in Congress, in the government bureaucracy, and in the White House. He had become a respected and trusted public figure who had placed his personal stamp on America's preparation for war. Thanks to his efforts, America entered the war with a running start and was able to launch a large-scale offensive less than one year later. In short, Marshall's accomplishments were gigantic. The depth and breadth of his leadership were awe-inspiring.

That leadership will serve as the focus for this study, with Marshall's actions from 1939 through early 1942 being analyzed from the perspective of strategic leadership. The intuitive notion of strategic leadership long pre-dates World War II; however, as a formal concept, it is relatively new. Examining Marshall through this prism will provide useful illustrative insights and shed light on what has been for most an unglamorous period overshadowed by the more dramatic events of the war. Interestingly enough, Marshall's situation during the prewar years has much in common with that of any strategic-level leader in peacetime attempting to achieve what he considers to be an adequate military force in the face of significant public opposition. Many of the insights are timeless. Apart from this, Marshall's leadership serves as an inspiring example in itself.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP**

The U.S. Army has formalized the concept of strategic leadership. In fact, one of the Army War College's core courses bears this title. According to this concept, the strategic leader occupies a major position of leadership in his country's larger and more complex organizations. He operates at a level where he has significant opportunities to shape national military strategy by virtue of his office. In so doing, he interacts extensively with key authoritative figures across a broad spectrum of governmental and private institutions involved with influencing policy, legislation, or popular opinion. He usually networks with a number of such people to exchange timely information, ideas, or assistance in accomplishing important tasks. Such networking yields considerable leverage in influencing decisions and in lubricating the usually ponderous machinery of government. In this regard, successful strategic leaders excel at cultivating strong personal bonds of trust and channels of communication in ever-increasing circles of influence.

This interaction requires rather sophisticated interpersonal skills such as polished communication abilities, well-developed powers of persuasion, negotiating talents, a keen sense of timing, and the sagacity to compromise on lesser issues to achieve agreement on more weighty matters. In this regard, the ability to build consensus among people of institutionally diverse viewpoints is an essential attribute. Success requires great peripheral vision. The strategic leader must have an open mind and a refined understanding of how his institution relates to the larger operating environment of government and other policy influencers, in general and issue-by-issue. He must have the knack for seeing issues from others' frames of reference, allowing him to anticipate

opposing positions and prepare cogent counterarguments in advance.

Within his own organization, the strategic leader's influence is most often exercised indirectly, oriented on long-term change. He spends much of his time designing, operating, or improving complex systems, processes, and organizations. For the most part, this systemic approach produces incremental adjustments over time rather than massive, immediate, dynamic change.

In fact, the strategic leader must focus chiefly on the future. He develops and articulates a strategic vision, which paints a picture of the long-term end state he desires his organization to achieve. This is his most essential task, for from this vision the entire organization derives its sustaining sense of purpose, motivation, and direction. It serves as the touchstone for orchestrating all ensuing major plans and actions. Ideally, it results in the entire organization moving enthusiastically, in conscious and coherent unison, toward meaningful, distant objectives.

Consistent with his vision, the strategic leader shapes the values of his organization. He may reinforce some of the existing values, downplay others, modify some, or introduce new ones. In any event, he articulates those values which are particularly important to him, stimulating their widespread acceptance and carefully monitoring their manifestations. He sets up his systems to reward those faithfully exhibiting such values and to reprove those who do not. Relative to these values, the strategic leader himself serves as the preeminent role model. In so doing, he frames the cultural and ethical fabric for the organization and emphasizes preferred patterns of conduct.

Of equal importance, the strategic leader structures his organization so that it can effectively pursue his vision and reinforce the more important institutional values. Almost always, this requires periodic adjustments, and can result in incremental or radical reorganizations. Major shifts in the overall operating environment also drive organizational changes. An organization, for example, may have to operate

differently in wartime than it does in peacetime, even in pursuit of the same vision and values.

In considering all proposed changes and policies, organizational and otherwise, the strategic leader must demonstrate the prescience to foresee their derivative effects, often termed their second- and third-order effects. These are non-primary, consequential results; they may be intended, unintended, beneficial, or harmful to the organization. They are usually not obvious beforehand. Taking these effects into account, the strategic leader avoids or mitigates undesirable by-products of his decisions, actions, or omissions. He can also use positive effects as tools to influence the organization subtly in desired ways.

In steering his organization, the strategic leader must demonstrate additional competencies as well. First, he establishes effective feedback loops so that he can monitor how the organization is progressing, particularly regarding his intentions and special interests. Second, he develops sophisticated, competent leaders to whom he can confidently delegate responsibility. These leaders are key to running large, complex organizations; to providing honest and meaningful feedback; to translating his vision into specific programs, activities, and procedures; to inculcating desired values; and to furnishing future strategic leadership in their own right. Third, he allocates resources wisely.

The last point to make about strategic leadership is that "it's lonely at the top." The strategic leader habitually operates in a *milieu* of ambiguity and uncertainty. He usually defines his tasks, articulates his vision, and takes positions with little, if any, guidance from superiors. Most voyages are through uncharted waters. Most choices defy recognition in advance as being "right" or "wrong." It is not a vocation for the weak at heart. The strategic leader thus works constantly on the "fuzzy" edges of analysis, perception, and anticipation. He must have the intense intellectual courage to oppose what he sees as "poor" decisions and to advocate "good" ones of major impact, especially when superiors have opposite inclinations.<sup>2</sup>

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **MARSHALL'S STRATEGIC VISION**

Marshall assumed his duties as Acting Chief of Staff in July 1939, at a time of great uncertainty. To many, including Marshall, the flames of conflict worldwide seemed about to get out of control. Europe stood on the verge of war, and Japan seemed bent on establishing hegemony, by force if necessary, in the Western Pacific and throughout the adjoining Asian hinterlands. The comforting sense of security from external threats that America felt in the 1920s and early 1930s seemed to have evaporated. Somehow the world was now more threatening, although specific threats to American security were difficult to envisage or articulate clearly. For most Americans, the real fear was that the United States would repeat its experience of the Great War, being eventually drawn into a major conflict overseas. In this unsettling mood of ominous ambiguity and uncertainty, Marshall brought to his new duties a sense of urgency and mission.

In planning and preparing for conflicts, strategic thinkers by nature gravitate toward using worse-case scenarios. This is because the consequences of not doing so can be so catastrophic and definitive. Marshall was no exception in this regard. He considered it likely that America would be faced with major hostilities as a result of the continuing deterioration in stability abroad. As a soldier charged with a major portion of his nation's war preparedness, he had to act based on the probability of such hostilities, involving perhaps multiple theaters of war. Furthermore, he felt strongly that war might come within several years. Hence, given the poor state of the Army's readiness and the long lead time needed to correct fundamental deficiencies and shortfalls, Marshall believed that time was of the essence. This sense of urgency and responsibility framed Marshall's strategic vision for the prewar years.

Before discussing the specifics of that vision, two prefatory points need to be made. First, Marshall admirers tend to assume that he envisaged in 1939 exactly all he would do for the next few years; the magnitude of his accomplishments, both in quantity and quality, suggest that he must have had a detailed blueprint from the beginning. This is clearly a myth. Evidence suggests rather that he had a much more general concept, or vision, of what he wanted to accomplish; that it was flexible enough to support a wide range of actions; and that he chose astutely from among those courses of action, based on changing conditions at home and abroad. The strength of his vision was its vitality. Despite changing circumstances, it served as a solid structural framework upon which to hang the many, inevitable adjustments, additions, embellishments, refinements, and actions without collapsing. Second, the term "strategic vision" is a by-product of the 1980s and 1990s. Marshall and his contemporaries didn't use the term. However, Marshall did have and consistently articulated what today would be called a vision; furthermore, it served as the conceptual lodestar for his actions. In Marshall's day, the notion of vision might have been called a program, a plan of action, or a set of objectives.

### **Preparedness.**

The centerpiece of Marshall's strategic vision was his mental image of an American Army fully manned, trained, and equipped in sufficient size during peacetime to deter aggression against the United States and its more important interests; if deterrence failed, this Army was to conduct decisive, successful combat operations almost immediately to win the war while continuing to expand, as necessary, through an efficient program of mobilization. Key wartime industries would have developed to the point that they could support the full war effort with needed supplies and equipment. In short, Marshall wanted the Army and related military industries largely prepared for war when the war began. This meant considerable preparatory actions during peacetime, the intensity and magnitude of which would be governed by the seriousness of potential threats from abroad. At the time, this



was a revolutionary idea, never before achieved in American history.<sup>3</sup>

This aspect of his vision grew out of his experiences in World War I. He had been stunned by America's unpreparedness for that war. A full year was required after Congress had declared war before even a crudely trained army could be deployed. Because of the lack of quality peacetime training, casualties were needlessly excessive. Moreover, American war production never had time to gear up. As a result, the American Expeditionary Force (A.E.F.) fought largely with French- or British-made guns, ammunition, airplanes, supplies, and equipment. "We went into the line...[with] everything begged, borrowed, or stolen—certainly not manufactured in America," he remarked in 1931. Marshall was determined never again to allow America to be placed in this "ghastly situation" of an "almost criminal lack of proper preparation."<sup>4</sup>

For the new Chief of Staff, the notions of being prepared for war and going about doing it were inseparable. In general terms, he continuously struck the theme of progressing with a "step-by-step coordinated increase." Above all, he wanted to proceed "in an orderly manner" to build a "balanced force" of all arms welded into "a perfect team." Remembering vividly the dysfunctional panic and waste which resulted when an unprepared America suddenly went to war in 1917, Marshall cautioned against the extremes of doing nothing and of trying to do all at once. In his experience, the first usually led to the second when the public suddenly awakened to the danger of war. His remarks on October 11, 1939 at a banquet are insightful:

Let me strongly emphasize the fact that we must not become involved by impatience or ignorance in an ill-conceived, overnight expansion, which would smother well-considered methods and leave us in a dilemma of confused results, half-baked and fatally unbalanced.

In his mind, the only workable antidote was a systematic, well-thought-out series of incremental, digestible steps to strengthen the country's military posture.<sup>5</sup>

First and foremost among such steps was the need to prime the pump of the nation's military industrial base. Marshall emphasized repeatedly that gearing up industry for military production was the most time-consuming element in the mobilization process. Much of what was to be used in war had to be produced in peace. As he told an audience in Brunswick during 1938:

No matter how many billions of dollars Congress places at our disposal on the day war is declared, they will not buy ten cents worth of materiel for delivery under twelve months, and a great deal of it requires a year and a half to manufacture.

It took even longer before troops had these items in sufficient quantity for meaningful training. In comparison, men and units could mobilize at a much faster pace. Thus, for Marshall, the first priority was the production of materiel in a balanced program to establish the reserve stocks needed for subsequent manpower mobilization. In fact, Marshall repeatedly emphasized that any orderly, balanced mobilization required the necessary equipment on hand before men could form new units and train properly. In this connection, the massive equipment shortages during mobilization for the Great War haunted Marshall as one of the greatest nightmares of his lifetime.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Fighting Formations.**

In addition to such materiel concerns, Marshall's vision of a fully manned and trained force encompassed some very specific criteria *vis-a-vis* the existing state of the Army. First, he envisioned an Army organized into corps and field armies, with their corresponding complements of "specialized" supporting troops—such as military police, engineers, logistical elements, air defense units, field artillery units, and signal elements. In 1939, neither the Regular Army nor the National Guard had any tactical corps or field army headquarters. During the lean years since World War I, the Army had concentrated on keeping the divisions as filled as resources permitted. Even so, all divisions were outrageously understrength. The larger formations required a certain

"excess" which Marshall intended to create. This was particularly important. In his mind's eye, the corps and field armies constituted the fundamental fighting formations of the next war. Second, he expected most corps to consist of both Regular Army and National Guard divisions, operating after much training as a truly unified team. Third, the corps and field army formations could only attain true proficiency through large-scale maneuvers.<sup>7</sup>

One can hardly overstate Marshall's emphasis on the importance of these maneuvers. He believed strongly that any future conflict would involve fluid movement and maneuver of large formations on the battlefield. The speedy German victory over Poland only reinforced his belief. Maneuvers featuring opposing corps and field armies trained higher-level commanders and staffs in the movement of large bodies of troops, a lost art in the U.S. Army by 1939. Marshall regarded these maneuvers as "a great college of leadership for the higher officers" and a "wonderful practical schooling" for younger leaders and their men. Only through maneuvers could a corps' or field army's diverse elements interact under pressure in a realistic environment; only in this way could they develop the combined-arms teamwork needed to prevail in battle. Only in this way could the larger headquarters hone the skills and procedures, only imperfectly imagined in the school house. Marshall emphasized this point during congressional testimony on November 30, 1939:

What appears satisfactory on paper too frequently we find quite impractical in actual operations....there is little that can be done in time of peace to simulate closely the conditions under which troops operate in war. Therefore, it is all the more important that we make every effort to learn the practical business of troop leadership and teamwork, utilizing field maneuvers for this purpose, and especially to wash out the over-theoretical or academic conceptions. We must have more simplicity of procedure, and that requires teamwork, and teamwork is possible only if we have an opportunity to practice as a team.<sup>8</sup>

Maneuvers also contributed in other ways. They helped identify significant flaws in the structuring of organizations of all sizes, serving as an invaluable catalyst for refinement.

They also helped develop the kind of resilient, vigorous, competent leaders which Marshall deemed essential for the rigorous demands of fast-paced mobile warfare. The truly gifted officers could be more readily earmarked for accelerated promotion because their talents more visibly stood out during demanding field duties.<sup>9</sup>

### **Autonomy Versus Independence for the Air Corps.**

Another aspect of Marshall's strategic vision concerned the Army Air Corps. As Deputy Chief of Staff, he had observed that air officers had almost no representation on the General Staff and that most General Staff officers had little interest in air-related matters. In fact, there was a strong anti-air bias. Many young air officers were going to Congress on their own, and stirring up everything, creating a general muddle. "They had something to complain about," Marshall later recalled, "because they were not getting recognition, and the ground staff at that time had little understanding of the air." Many Air Corps supporters, inside and outside the Army, advocated an independent air force modeled after Britain's Royal Air Force; they cultivated congressmen to champion their cause. Many ground Army senior officers, on the other hand, would have been only too happy to rid themselves of the Air Corps.<sup>10</sup>

Marshall found this situation deplorable, but decided to move cautiously. In his view, the Air Corps formed a particularly critical part of the combined-arms team to be forged. Ground and air officers had to grow to understand and respect each others' roles if anything approaching the necessary teamwork between them could be realized. This mutual understanding and respect could not be dictated; it had to be nurtured so it could flourish of its own accord. This was Marshall's approach. He intended to increase incrementally the autonomy of the Air Corps within the Army, in the process developing its leaders so they could perform respectably as senior commanders and staff officers. In fact, Marshall aimed to give the Air Corps all the autonomy it could handle. However, he kept this intention fairly close-held, making it a semi-hidden aspect of his strategic vision. To have articulated this openly would have ignited a fire storm of attention,

undermining his efforts to effect subtle, almost imperceptible, attitudinal and organizational changes. Marshall thus envisioned an autonomous Air Corps, working harmoniously with the ground forces to form the "perfect combined-arms team," in addition to performing strategic bombing missions apart from the ground forces.<sup>11</sup>

In working toward this end, he wanted to postpone indefinitely Air Corps independence. He felt that establishing a separate air force on the verge of war would create organizational chaos and make air-ground teamwork all the more difficult to achieve. It was trying enough just dealing with one other service, the Navy. An independent air force would result in a quantum drop in unity of effort for a long time. This Marshall wanted to avoid at all costs. He advocated expanding the Air Corps' strategic bombing capacity, but he also insisted on enhancing the air's tactical capability to support ground maneuver. In an independent air force, the advocates of strategic bombing could easily get the upper hand, causing enormous problems in obtaining the needed support for ground troops. Besides, in Marshall's sage judgement, the Air Corps lacked sufficient educated and experienced senior officers to establish its own effective General Staff, a prerequisite for independence.<sup>12</sup>

### **Organizational inadequacies.**

Another element of Marshall's strategic vision, also only faintly articulated, concerned the basic organization of the War Department. That structure may have been adequate for the sleepy-hollow pace of the 1920s and early 1930s, but by 1939 it had become increasingly dysfunctional. Marshall had experienced this first-hand as Deputy Chief of Staff. The War Department's Staff consisted of many diverse sections, each of which had set responsibilities for certain aspects of Army matters. The problem was that no staff section by doctrine or tradition had the authority to require collaboration and resolution of issues across staff lines. Since most problems involved matters affecting two or more staff sections, virtually every issue had to percolate up to the Chief of Staff personally for decision. This even applied to purely administrative and

procedural rulings of relatively little account. No one below the Chief had the authority to force a decision, for example, when staff sections disagreed fundamentally. The Staff, as a rule, felt comfortable with the setup. There was a certain feudal quality about it. Virtually every staff section head had direct and frequent access to the Chief of Staff. Since such access equated to power and prestige, it was a tenaciously guarded prerogative.<sup>13</sup>

From Marshall's perspective, the process was incredibly inefficient. It overwhelmed him with an avalanche of unnecessary detail that left little time to deal with larger, weightier matters. Sixty-one staff officers had direct access to him; in addition, the commanders of some 30 major and 350 smaller commands fell under his immediate control in his role as the de facto commanding general of all U.S. Army forces. Since staff sections coordinated sequentially on issues, the process of analyzing and proposing solutions was extremely slow. Even worse, once decisions were made, no one staff section was empowered to follow up comprehensively to ensure faithful compliance. As a result, the War Department's routine was unresponsive and fragmented, due to extreme structural compartmentalization. Things were continuously falling through the cracks.<sup>14</sup>

Marshall envisioned a much simplified and streamlined command and staff structure, although he wasn't sure exactly what form it should take. In general, he wanted an organization wherein he could delegate authority to make and follow-up on routine decisions. He wanted a mechanism by which some staff entity could drive a rapid and comprehensive analysis of issues across staff lines, ensuring an equally comprehensive follow-up in implementing decisions. In short, Marshall intended to mold an efficient system that relieved him of the crushing burden of unnecessary detail so he could concentrate on broader policy matters.<sup>15</sup>

In attempting to implement this part of his vision, Marshall knew to proceed cautiously. Any major changes to the War Department's staff structure required congressional approval in the form of legislation. This would be difficult to obtain since any radical reorganization would trigger a virtual "palace revolt"

by those who would be "disenfranchised" within the War Department. The likely result would be an extended and ugly debate aired through the open process of congressional testimony. Even if successful, this approach "would do more harm than good," Marshall commented. The Army would emerge with its prestige tarnished and its morale diminished.<sup>16</sup>

Wishing to avoid such a Pyrrhic victory, Marshall decided to move incrementally, although he had no comprehensive blueprint in mind. By so doing, he demonstrated a masterful understanding of the counterproductive derivative effects of proceeding in a more direct and draconian fashion.

### **Reaching Out to the Navy.**

The last element of Marshall's strategic vision in 1939 addressed the Navy. Again, without any detailed plan in mind, he wanted to build a much more active and cooperative working relationship with his sister service. First and foremost, this meant establishing sound relations, personally and professionally, between the Chief of Naval Operations and himself. Marshall correctly perceived that, as war approached, the Army and the Navy would have to act increasingly in unison on a host of matters, extending from procurement to training, to the conduct of joint operations, to the formulation of strategy. Marshall intensely wanted to improve the foundation for a truly propitious wartime working relationship at all levels.<sup>17</sup>

In summary, Marshall's strategic vision dealt almost exclusively with the need to reshape and rebuild the Army. In 1939, the Army constituted a mere skeleton of an effective combat force, inadequate even by World War I standards. The open warfare anticipated by Marshall involved significantly higher standards. Facing such a daunting challenge at a time of growing hostilities abroad, it is not surprising that Marshall devoted the great bulk of his mental and physical energies to preparing the Army for war, the worst contingency foreseeable from the ominous flow of world events. Only slowly, as the foreign situation became increasingly unstable and as he matured in his position, would Marshall concern himself with

more profound considerations of strategy. These were largely peripheral to his initial strategic vision.



## CHAPTER 4

### EXPANDING THE ARMY, 1939-40

The Army in 1939 was in sad shape. Ranked 17th globally in manpower, it consisted of only 9 Regular Army and 18 National Guard divisions—all very much understrength and equipped with obsolete World War I-vintage materiel. Of these units, only three Regular Army divisions had enough men to conduct operations effectively above the battalion level. On September 1, 1939, Regular Army strength was approaching 210,000 enlisted men, while National Guard strength stood at slightly below 200,000 in twice as many divisions. These figures fell well short of those authorized by the National Defense Act of 1920, which Congress had originally intended to serve as the framework for defense in the post-Great War era. This legislation authorized a Regular Army of 280,000 enlisted men and a National Guard of 450,000 men; however, Congress had subsequently declined to vote the appropriations to field the full authorized strength. It was a hollow Army in every way.<sup>18</sup>

Hitler's invasion of Poland triggered hopes for substantial increases, but those hopes were short-lived. President Roosevelt allowed only a modest increase of 17,000 in the Regular Army and 35,000 in the National Guard; he claimed that it "was all the public would be ready to accept without undue excitement."<sup>19</sup>

Marshall was disappointed, but made the most of this initial expansion. He immediately carried out a long-contemplated reorganization of Regular Army divisions. The old cumbersome "square division" of four large regiments was replaced by a "triangular division" structure of three, smaller, more mobile regiments. Using the 17,000-man increase plus the additional troops generated by the move to a smaller division, Marshall created five fully manned divisions of the new type. He also created a host of specialized units to serve

as support troops for one corps. Then he moved quickly to get these formations into the field for meaningful training to build combined-arms teamwork and to test the new organizational structure. He also scheduled corps and division maneuvers for the spring of 1940, and arranged for the Third Division to conduct a joint amphibious operation with the Navy in January 1940 on the West Coast.<sup>20</sup>

### **Intermediate Goals.**

While modest by later standards, these steps appeared dramatic compared to the inactivity of the previous interwar years. Marshall, however, had grander designs. While he had no exact picture of the Army's ultimate size in accordance with his strategic vision, he did have in mind some very specific intermediate goals.

Marshall's most immediate goal was to bring the existing troops "to a full state of efficiency as quickly as possible." This translated into the divisional reorganization, the creation of a corps headquarters and one set of corps support troops, and the scheduling of maneuvers previously discussed. It also involved ensuring that existing forces possessed all of their authorized equipment and sustaining supplies.<sup>21</sup>

His next goal related to the General Staff's existing mobilization plan. That plan called for an Initial Protective Force (IPF) of 400,000 men, theoretically made up of 165,000 Regular Army soldiers and 235,000 men from the National Guard. The IPF made up the immediate defense force, a component of the larger Protective Mobilization Plan (PMP) force, which would mobilize over a 4-month period. On paper, the PMP force consisted of all 280,000 men of the Regular Army and all 450,000 men of the National Guard authorized by the National Defense Act of 1920; it also included 270,000 men to be recruited as replacements upon mobilization. Thus, the PMP called for a total force of one million men. Marshall's plan aimed at expanding the Army until it could provide the full IPF on short notice and at procuring all critical supplies and equipment (e.g., ammunition, rifles, artillery, tanks, trucks, uniforms) necessary for the full PMP force. This procurement

action was especially critical to Marshall's calculations since it required 1-2 years to complete. To field the IPF, the Army needed all 280,000 Regular Army soldiers authorized by the National Defense Act; those not counted against the IPF itself were either already stationed overseas or needed to train recruits for the PMP force. To get 165,000 Regulars for the IPF required an inventory of 280,000 men on hand from the beginning. In short, Marshall's approach was to build up the PMP force, making it for the first time a truly credible basis for national defense.<sup>22</sup>

In the process, Marshall sought to organize the IPF into nine corps, each consisting of one Regular Army division, two National Guard divisions, and 10,000 corps support troops. In addition, he planned to establish two pure Regular Army corps for use as a rapid deployment force in a sudden emergency. But his overarching intent here was to create a more "unified force" in the sense of a closer operational and associational relationship between Regular Army and National Guard units.<sup>23</sup>

In striving toward these intermediate goals, Marshall would grow frustrated repeatedly during the winter and spring of 1939-40. While his own sense of urgency permanently increased with events in Poland, the mood of the country demonstrated a distinct mercurial character. The surrender of Poland and the uneasy quiet, the so-called "*Sitzkrieg*" or Phoney War, which settled over Europe sapped the initial zeal to rebuild America's defenses. Many expressed the hope that Britain and France could handle Germany by themselves, allowing the United States to stay out of the looming conflict.<sup>24</sup>

### **Discord within the War Department.**

Secretary of War Woodring, by background a strong non-interventionist, was absolutely unwilling to push for significant military increases. Locked in an open and embarrassing power feud with Assistant Secretary of War Louis Johnson, he had, in addition, lost most of his influence with the President; his uncompromising views on neutrality were far too extreme even for Roosevelt at the time. Johnson,

a strong advocate for increased airpower, saw no alarming need to expand ground forces. Thus, Marshall could expect no help whatsoever from his immediate civilian superiors in running interference on Capitol Hill or at the White House. Wisely, he kept good personal relations with both Woodring and Johnson although the two seldom spoke to each other. By skillfully remaining neutral in this feud, Marshall kept the War Department fully functional and active during a period of potentially disruptive internal discord. Even so, one could not say that the War Department spoke with a single voice. For his part, Marshall received virtually no guidance from above.<sup>25</sup>

### **Relationship with the President.**

With no help from his civilian superiors in gaining entree to the White House, Marshall found the President generally indifferent to the arguments for sizable Army expansion. Roosevelt was a Navy man with little cultivated interest in Army matters. He proposed building hordes of planes and ships to deal with future threats, knowing that such actions were more palatable to the American people. Ships and planes implied a purely defensive posture to fend away would-be aggressors from the Western Hemisphere. But a large land Army clearly suggested a possible intent to ship America's sons to fight abroad, a message Roosevelt shied away from sending at this point. For these reasons, the President significantly reduced the War Department's requested appropriations for fiscal year 1941. While the reduced figure was still high compared to that of previous years, it fell far short of what Marshall needed just to complete equipping the existing Regular Army and National Guard troops. In addition, Roosevelt allowed no increase in troop strength, to Marshall's great frustration.<sup>26</sup>

This frustration was intensified by the Chief of Staff's personal relationship with the President. Roosevelt was a daunting figure who usually attempted to dominate and terminate conversations on his own terms. Marshall had trouble getting a chance to present his views. Since the President didn't want to discuss seriously any Army increases, he repeatedly and slyly steered the subjects of their conversations in other directions. So thwarted, Marshall had

extreme difficulty getting his views aired to the President in a comprehensive and consistent way.<sup>27</sup>

The Chief of Staff's approach was also a factor. He was a naturally formal person who strove to keep some personal distance between the President and himself. He had seen how Roosevelt tended toward more informal relations with cabinet members and advisors; however, the President used semi-familiarity as a means to poke fun at those individuals in order to dismiss ideas glibly which did not appeal to him. Familiarity didn't breed contempt; but it did breed an environment wherein the President had a clear upper hand in flippantly disregarding thoughtful advice. Marshall resolved to play by different rules. He wanted a relationship based on mutual respect, one more geared to his own reserved personal style. Thus, he refused to "drop in" at the White House or curry favor with the President on purely personal terms. His discussions focused strictly on business with no unrelated personal chats. Marshall even deliberately refused to laugh at the President's jokes; laughter only encouraged him to filibuster his way around difficult questions requiring immediate attention. He used levity to manipulate subordinates like puppets. Marshall denied him the use of that tool.<sup>28</sup>

In the short term, the Chief of Staff's approach made it very difficult for him to establish a good working relationship with the President, at least until the General learned to be more forceful in speaking his mind. For some time, Roosevelt was clearly uncomfortable with Marshall's extreme seriousness. In the long run, however, this approach had the desired effect. The unwavering formality set an impressive tone of dignity and respect in their relations; this, in turn, eventually gave Marshall enormous influence with Roosevelt. Marshall was regarded as his own person, not a Roosevelt creature. However, this influence developed gradually as they came to know each other better. It was hardly in evidence before May 1940.<sup>29</sup>

### **Initial Relations with Congress.**

In addition to his initial rough going with the President, Marshall also encountered a generally unsympathetic

Congress. With his presidentially scaled-down budget for 1941 in hand, Marshall testified repeatedly before the House from February 23 until April 3, 1940. Only by intense, last-minute lobbying did he succeed in averting draconian cuts. Even so, the House slashed the proposed budget by almost 10 percent, and approved only 57 of the meager 166 planes requested. Again, Marshall mixed disappointment with deepening concern.<sup>30</sup>

Despite this frustration, Marshall set some key themes with Congress which would return later to serve him well. In February, he shared that part of his strategic vision concerning the need for a balanced, step-by-step approach to military expansion:

As to the existing crisis abroad, we must face the facts. Any major developments there should be paralleled by added precautions in this country. If the situation grows more desperate, we should add to the numbers of seasoned troops....If Europe blazes in late spring or summer, we must put our house in order before the sparks reach the Western Hemisphere.

Marshall went on to say that he opposed massive, sudden expansions; he also opposed waiting until the last moment and then attempting the impossible. Congressmen and the public would recall these themes later when Europe did, in fact, begin to blaze in a big way. Marshall's almost prophetic suggestion, combined with his very reasonable and steady approach, would later enhance his prestige greatly; he would appear as the man with a coherent, consistent plan at a time of alarming uncertainty. He would appear as a steadying hand at the wheel when sentiments became almost frantic. The foundation for this stature with Congress and the public was laid during the first three months of 1940. The consistency with which he repeatedly articulated what appeared to be a calm, deliberate, measured, well-thought-out approach was crucially important in this regard.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the lack of satisfactory progress in pleading his case for minimal expansion, Marshall kept the faith. He remained totally loyal to the President. He decided early to operate faithfully as a member of the administration's team;

while he was frequently tempted to plead his case directly to the public, he felt that any short-term gains would be dwarfed by adverse second- and third-order effects, namely, the loss of trust and confidence in him by the President. A certain group of senators was very sympathetic to Marshall's designs. They privately encouraged him to state openly that the nation's security depended on more military appropriations than the President was willing to grant. These senators pressured the Chief of Staff intensely and repeatedly. So did many members of his own staff. Yet, Marshall refused. He felt that direct appeals of this nature violated the spirit of the Constitution regarding civilian control over the military, a principle he deeply revered. Such conduct would make him appear "political," power-hungry, and self-serving. Most important of all, this kind of conduct would permanently undermine his reputation as a "straight shooter," one who deals with people and issues in a straightforward manner without a complex web of hidden agendas lurking in the shadows. This perception would be fatal to anyone in Marshall's shoes. It would prevent him from ever obtaining the President's full trust and confidence. It would also reduce his credibility on Capitol Hill, where such disloyalty engenders no enduring respect or admiration on a grand scale. People would regard him as just another Washington climber with strong personal ambitions. Marshall wisely decided that in the long run the interests of the country and the Army would be best served by working "within the team of which the president was the head." This approach genuinely reflected his own temperament as well.<sup>32</sup>

Marshall was reluctant to make any direct appeals for another reason. He wanted to avoid creating the impression that he was at the forefront of pushing the country toward involvement in a new world war overseas. If he got too far ahead of the President and the Congress in this regard, the public and the press would likely turn against him and undermine his credibility. He would be branded as just another militarist. For this reason, Marshall chose to tread softly in awakening the public consciousness to the need for military expansion. A too forceful effort could lead to a complete rejection of his views and a dramatic reduction of his influence, to the ultimate impairment of the entire rearmament effort.<sup>33</sup>

Only one thought really comforted Marshall about his somewhat checkmated situation. He presciently expected events in Europe to take a turn for the worse; if they did, he would be prepared to capitalize on them. Plans for additional increases were readied and placed on the shelf for the proper moment. Marshall was already demonstrating a masterful sense of timing. In considering the military appropriation bill for fiscal year 1941, Marshall remarked to his staff, "It will react to our advantage if our bill is acted on at the latest possible date. It is probable that events in Europe will develop in such a way as to affect Congressional action." He was also demonstrating a very refined sense of the art of the possible, both for the moment and for the future.<sup>34</sup>

### **Training and Readiness.**

While not particularly productive from a legislative perspective, the spring of 1940 was extremely fruitful for Army training. Soon after becoming Chief of Staff, Marshall had acquired the funding from Congress for sizable maneuvers in 1940. He placed great emphasis on their importance and dedicated enormous resources to their preparations. First, the Regular Army conducted extensive field training through division level during the winter and early spring. Then he grouped the divisions in several instances into opposing corps for a number of larger maneuvers. One exercise involved over 70,000 men organized into opposing provisional field armies. National Guard training also improved through additional drill periods and an extra week of field training obtained previously by Marshall from Congress. This series of exercises upgraded profoundly the readiness of the units involved and provided invaluable experience for conducting future maneuvers of even greater magnitude. Newly developed doctrine, techniques, procedures, and organizations were tested and refined.

Marshall was pleased with the results, but Congress remained skeptical of the benefits. He had to defend constantly the value and costs of these exercises. As he noted, these were the first genuine peacetime corps and field army maneuvers in the history of the nation. Before the fall of



1939, he emphasized, "the Regular Army, although highly developed in the efficiency of its small units, has been largely an army of battalions." It was stationed overseas and in 130 different posts across the country. As he remarked during a radio broadcast in February 1940:

Seldom were regiments complete or united. Brigades were a rarity. We possessed no complete divisions and the battalions of the incomplete divisions were widely scattered. The Army corps, the great battle team, existed solely on paper.

The credit for the dramatic transformation in training readiness in less than a year must go completely to Marshall. He drove the preparations and overcame virtually every major obstacle personally. With regard to this element of his vision, Marshall followed through in impressive and consistent style.<sup>35</sup>

### **Army-Navy Relations.**

At the same time, he significantly improved Army-Navy cooperation. At his initiative, the two services conducted a successful division-size amphibious exercise in January 1940. The Army Area commander on the scene, Lieutenant General DeWitt, subsequently wrote to Marshall:

There was not a single case of friction, and the good will of each [service] toward the other was most apparent. It was a very happy situation and I think has built a solid foundation for the successful initiation and outcome of any future exercises....The basis for it all, of course, exists in the relationship between yourself and Admiral Stark [the Chief of Naval Operations] and it has permeated down through all echelons in both services.<sup>36</sup>

This was music to Marshall's ears. He had very deliberately nurtured a strong relationship with his counterpart in the Navy involving a host of issues and interests. At Marshall's initiative, they had established their own informal Joint Air Advisory Committee outside the purview of the more formal and bureaucratic Joint Board umbrella. This committee concerned itself with aviation matters of mutual interest, with a charter to advise the two service chiefs on employment considerations, joint operations, common production

specifications, and common-use facilities. The Chief of the Air Corps headed the Army's delegation, while the Chief of the Aeronautical Board headed the Navy's. The real purpose behind the committee was to facilitate the exchange of views and ideas, building consensus in those areas where working in concert yielded greater efficiencies; the design or production of planes and other aviation equipment was perhaps the most frequently discussed topic.<sup>37</sup>

Marshall was pleased with the general direction of Army-Navy relations, which had "put the two services on a more solid basis" and worked out "common problems...on a very intimate basis." In his mind, the Army and the Navy had begun to work together harmoniously on a considerably expanded scale. By so doing, they were strengthening the foundation for the kind of joint teamwork and unity of effort essential for any major conflict.<sup>38</sup>

### **Networking and Lobbying.**

Despite making headway in some of these areas, Marshall smarted from the 10 percent cut to his proposed budget for 1941 voted by the House on April 3, 1940. He now turned to an old and powerful acquaintance for help. Bernard Baruch, an independently wealthy banker, had served as a confidant to many presidents, including Roosevelt. He was also an invaluable pipeline to key congressional leaders. While serving as Pershing's aide, Marshall had met Baruch in the early 1920s and had maintained a cordial relationship ever since. Baruch generally supported expanded military preparedness, and had bombarded the new Chief of Staff with a steady stream of "good ideas"—most of which were less than practical. Nonetheless, conscious of Baruch's influence and large ego, Marshall assigned to a member of his immediate staff the additional duty to keep in close contact with the old man, to listen carefully to all his suggestions, and to ensure they were brought to the Chief of Staff's personal attention promptly. Marshall also ensured Baruch was well informed of the Army's needs; he even had Baruch flown to exercises and training centers to keep him abreast of the latest problems and developments. Responding now to Marshall's request for

assistance, Baruch quickly arranged a private dinner with key senators so Marshall could explain his needs. Baruch felt strongly that the Army had never really gotten its story over.<sup>39</sup>

Events abroad helped somewhat. The Germans attacked both Denmark and Norway on April 9, intensifying Marshall's concern over the critical items which the Initial Protective Force still lacked. The next night, at the dinner, the senators had the fresh news of Denmark's surrender ringing in their ears. Nonetheless, he faced a tough audience. Marshall pleaded his case until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning but, judging from the stern faces and comments of the senators, felt he had failed to persuade anyone. But his array of facts and compelling arguments, pursued with a powerful sense of conviction, won the day. Senator Alva Adams, speaking for most of his colleagues, told Marshall, "You came [here tonight] before the committee without even a piece of paper and you got every damned thing you asked for."

Other European events would soon ensure that Marshall would get much more than the equivalent of the 10 percent budget cut back, but this dinner session was critically important for future relations with the Senate. Baruch considered it "a turning point in convincing such critics of preparedness as Senator Adams of the urgent need for speeding the rebuilding of our defenses." Even more important, Marshall had deeply impressed particularly powerful senators and opened new channels of communication with them, in the process demonstrating superb interpersonal skills. He had profoundly expanded their trust and confidence in his stewardship. Marshall's networking with, and through, Baruch had paid handsome dividends.<sup>40</sup>

### **Confronting the President.**

Five days later, on April 15, the Chief of Staff advised Secretary Woodring that the worsening international situation required him to advise an increase in the state of military preparation. The President soon approved the request in principle for additional critical items for existing units of the

Regular Army and National Guard, but then pruned the request down from \$25 million to \$18 million.<sup>41</sup>

Marshall reacted strongly. What he had requested was the bare minimum needed. He now sought to influence the President indirectly by seeking the support of Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, one of the more powerful and influential members of Roosevelt's inner circle. Morgenthau invited Marshall to his office. The Secretary told him that the War Department was making a mistake in "feeding the President little pieces here and little pieces there" in terms of what was needed. He encouraged Marshall to present a balanced proposal for overall defense needs that they could sell to the Congress. The problem to date had been Marshall's difficulty in getting Roosevelt's attention long enough to make a thorough presentation. This had been compounded by Marshall's natural deference to the President's dominating conversational style.<sup>42</sup>

On May 11, the day after Germany attacked Holland and Belgium, the Chief of Staff visited Morgenthau and presented a program amounting to a staggering \$650 million. Marshall was brutally frank. Desperately needed, along with dramatic increases in Regular Army manpower, were many fighters and bombers to build a modern air force; ammunition plants; reserve equipment for the entire Protective Mobilization Plan force; and a host of equipment from blankets to rifles for the grossly underequipped existing forces, Regular Army and National Guard. His plan also called for raising the PMP force to 1.25 million men, under arms and combat ready within 6 months of declaring full mobilization.

Marshall's articulate arguments won Morgenthau over. He agreed to serve as the Chief of Staff's advocate when they met with the President two days later. The Secretary sagely advised Marshall to speak frankly and forcefully: "There are too few people who do it and he likes it."

Marshall took the advice. The meeting at the White House on May 13 was pivotal. On that day, news of dramatic German successes against the French and British had just arrived. The President proposed building 50,000 planes a year and

expanding the Navy; he saw no dire need to build up the ground forces. He wasn't even interested in training enough pilots to fly a substantially larger number of planes. He had locked onto airplane production as an overly simplistic, one-dimensional panacea for national security. Of course, this flew in the face of all Marshall wanted in terms of a holistic, complementary force of combined-arms elements, adequately equipped and trained. Roosevelt dominated the conversation and dismissed Morgenthau's suggestion that he hear out the Chief of Staff. "I know exactly what he will say," commented Roosevelt. "There is no reason for me to hear him at all." Neither Secretary Woodring nor Assistant Secretary Johnson, who were present, supported Marshall or the general thrust of his proposals which Morgenthau had outlined earlier.

Nonetheless, the General was determined to have his day in court. He walked over to the President and, looking down, firmly and sternly asked for three minutes of his time to speak. The President relented graciously. Marshall then made a concise presentation, about the state of the Army, complete with anger, frustration, and concern. The vehemence and emotional intensity of the presentation stunned the President, as did the striking facts. Roosevelt asked Marshall to return the next day with a detailed list of what was needed. The result was the President's agreement to submit a supplementary Army appropriation of \$732 million, covering most of what Marshall had requested. Roosevelt sent it to Congress on May 16.<sup>43</sup>

Marshall later characterized this encounter as the breaking of a log jam. Again, his compelling arguments and articulateness had largely carried the day. But they would never have succeeded, had he not mustered the moral courage to speak candidly and vigorously to challenge the President in a forceful way. Marshall had for the first time made Roosevelt appreciate the reasoning for a balanced force, as well as the necessary components of that force. This was a remarkable achievement which raised Marshall's standing with the President; this experience altered their relationship fundamentally in a positive way. The cordial

working relationship which the Chief of Staff had established beforehand with Morgenthau played a major facilitating role.<sup>44</sup>

### **Public Perceptions Change.**

While the German invasion of Denmark and Norway heightened general concern, most Americans seemed confident that Britain and France would triumph in the end by themselves. After all, many military experts rated the French Army alone as the best in the world. However, the spectacular German victories in Western Europe during May and June 1940 dramatically changed this thinking. Suddenly both the public and the Congress perceived a clear and evident threat and became much more disposed toward increased military spending. France had been completely eliminated as a world power. The British Army had lost most of its heavy equipment. To many, the invasion of Britain itself seemed imminent. As Marshall later wrote,

The precariousness of the situation and its threat to the security of the United States became suddenly apparent to our people, and the pendulum of public opinion reversed itself, swinging violently to the other extreme, in an urgent demand for enormous and immediate increases in modern equipment and of the armed forces.<sup>45</sup>

Congress warmly greeted the President's request of May 16 for an additional \$1 billion, of which \$732 million was earmarked for the Army. As the German victories loomed even more total, Marshall and others convinced Roosevelt to forward a second, supplemental appropriations bill to the Hill on May 31; of this amount, \$709 million was for Army needs. Congress not only approved both proposals but also added to them, appropriating money to raise the authorized Regular Army enlisted strength from 230,000 to 375,000. But most important to Marshall, the approved funds allowed production to start in earnest on all sorts of items needed to equip the entire PMP force—from blankets and uniforms to tanks and airplanes. The approved money would also allow the Army to stockpile critical, long-lead items for a force of two million, as

well as to build an industrial base capable of supplying a total force of four million.<sup>46</sup>

While satisfying in so many ways, these large increases raised many apprehensions for Marshall. Recalling his vivid World War I experiences, he remembered that the huge expenditures in 1917 had also created huge and unrealistic public expectations of immediate results. When these results did not quickly surface, much outrage was directed at those in charge. In short, Marshall knew fully the psychological derivative effects of the enormous appropriations, and sought to inoculate the public mind against those expectations. He also wanted to continue to sell his concept for orderly, measured, systematic approaches to further mobilization.

Thus, in his frequent testimony before congressional committees and in a series of speeches and radio broadcasts, he hammered home these themes. He emphasized that the recent appropriations "would bear no fruit for at least a year, and for the majority of items, a year and a half to two years." He went on to caution that "an army—a large army—can not be recruited, equipped, and trained overnight." He reiterated that the War Department had long-standing, well-thought-out plans for step-by-step coordinated increases, as required by the international situation, and that he intended to proceed with them in an orderly, businesslike manner. "My thought," he said, "is...that we should resist ideas and enthusiasms that will not stand the searching test of common sense. The impulse of patriotic America is a wonderful thing, but its impatience to overcome the delays of past indifference, can be a destructive force." <sup>47</sup>

Marshall's conduct during May and June of 1940 greatly enhanced his stature with the public, the Congress, and the President. His poise and calmness during such uncertain and near-panicky times were widely noted. He had been a tower of strength and resolve. He appeared to have a comprehensive, flexible, reasoned plan to handle these and future developments. More importantly, he displayed impressive self-confidence and seemed to know what he was talking about. His words exuded eminent common sense. His greatest achievement, however, was in getting America in

focus with his strategic vision for war preparedness. In this whole realm of mobilization, he now emerged as the leading coherent, conceptual force within the government.

This period also witnessed the end of the Woodring-Johnson feud. Given the international crisis, Roosevelt determined to make a bold move. He named Henry Stimson, a 72-year-old former Secretary of War and a Republican, as Woodring's replacement. Johnson was replaced as well. Marshall and Stimson were men of similar temperament and values. Stimson strongly supported steps to strengthen America's preparedness. He and the Chief of Staff worked hard at developing their relationship on the basis of teamwork, mutual support, unity of effort, and respect. They went on to form an extremely effective team. Once again, the War Department could speak with a single voice. Here again, Marshall's superb interpersonal skills, including a remarkable sense of give and take, were critical in getting and keeping the relationship on a sound footing. Very fortunately, Stimson was equally adept at applying those skills.<sup>48</sup>

### **The Draft and the National Guard.**

With Germany driving the final stake into the heart of France, the next major public issue involving mobilization centered about the draft, or selective service. Earlier that spring, Grenville Clark, an influential New York lawyer, took up the cause of introducing selective service as "the only fair, efficient and democratic way to raise an army." He put together a highly effective bipartisan movement to lobby congressmen, generals, the press, and like-minded associates. He organized dinners, wrote letters to editors, recommended those favorable to his cause for influential positions, and proposed selective service legislation to Congress. During May, his group unsuccessfully sought the support of the President, as well as that of Marshall, for the legislation. Both men felt strongly that the time was not quite right. Public support, they believed, was lacking for such a drastic measure. Certainly Congress would summarily reject the proposal as premature. Undaunted, Clark persisted in advocating the draft. Marshall preferred to focus on recruiting



up to the new authorized manpower ceiling for the Regular Army; using the additional men, he intended to bring all active divisions up to their full peacetime strength. An immediate draft would disrupt this process by causing many Regulars to be sent to train the huge influx of inductees. Marshall was content to build up production stockages for later manpower expansion.<sup>49</sup>

Nonetheless, Clark lobbied and lobbied. The completeness of Germany's conquest of France and the appointment of his law partner, Henry Stimson, as Secretary of War greatly assisted his efforts. The fall of France especially galvanized public sentiment in favor of preparedness; suddenly the passage of a draft bill in peacetime seemed a distinct possibility.

Marshall, who had since the early 1920s philosophically supported the notion of selective service, finally decided in early June to support the measure, but only clandestinely at first. He wanted to see the bill introduced as a ground-swell, civilian initiative, a sort of popular act. If he lent his official sponsorship to the legislation before it was formally introduced, he thought the public would regard it as his bill. This would likely precipitate an antimilitary backlash in Congress; this development, in turn, could well have adverse spillover impacts in disrupting future mobilization efforts. Privately, however, with the President's blessing, Marshall sent members of his staff to help write the legislation. He also lobbied very discretely on the Hill.<sup>50</sup>

Once the bill was introduced, he went "all out in the arguments for its passage...." He openly courted congressmen and testified repeatedly before congressional committees, endorsing the bill in the strongest terms. He argued that the possible fall of Great Britain in the near term dictated the need to bring both Regular Army and National Guard units up to full strength; this could only be done with inductees. He did not believe it was possible to form an Army large enough to meet likely contingencies through voluntary enlistments alone. The only realistic alternative was the selective service system, "which would furnish sufficient personnel to bring the National Guard and the Regular Army

to full strength in the shortest possible time, and to do this in a controlled and therefore efficient manner, in contrast to the piecemeal, unbalanced basis of voluntary enlistments."<sup>51</sup>

In supporting the draft legislation, Marshall insisted on the need to federalize the National Guard and call it to active duty for 18 months of training. He offered compelling arguments. First, the Guard would be needed to train a large share of the inductees by absorbing them into its understrength companies and battalions. Second, the Regular Army could not be enlarged as an alternative because it didn't have enough understrength units to absorb so many inductees; it could create new units only by emasculating old ones. Also, there was no equipment on hand yet for additional Regular units, unless it were pulled from National Guard units, an unacceptable proposal if the Guard was to continue training. Furthermore, Guard units were manned at about only 40 percent strength; they needed the inductee fillers and the associated, intensified training to upgrade their war readiness.<sup>52</sup>

Marshall's testimony was brilliantly informed, comprehensive, and persuasive. Single-handedly, he represented the administration, and beat back a plethora of counterproposals and counterarguments. But he did have to compromise on one key point to ensure passage. The bill would only call the Guard to Federal service for 12 instead of 18 months.

On August 27, Congress authorized the call-up of the National Guard for 1 year of Federal service. On September 14, it approved the selective service legislation; 2 days later, the first National Guard units reported for active duty. On October 8, Congress approved a third supplemental appropriation for the Army; it amounted to slightly more than \$1.5 billion to cover the costs of mobilizing the National Guard and implementing selective service. It also provided for critical items needed to expand the Army to 1.4 million men by the end of 1941.<sup>53</sup>

On September 16, Marshall made a broadcast on CBS radio regarding the recently passed Selective Service Act. He stated:

...the National Defense Act of 1920, the lesson of our lack of preparation in 1917 and 1918, is being put forth into effect in a progressive, business-like manner. The Selective Service Act has added the final touch of authority to enable America to go to work effectively at the business of preparing herself against the uncertainties, the threatening dangers of the immediate future.

Marshall's consistent and persistent pursuit of the very core element of his strategic vision made this so. America was now clearly on the road to preparing for war—a rocky road that Marshall had roughly imagined a year before.<sup>54</sup>

By the end of the year, the results were astounding. At that point, the Army had 800,000 men in the field undergoing intensive training. The net gain in strength during the last three months was 182,000 men, nearly equal to the total size of the Regular Army when Marshall became Acting Chief of Staff in July 1939. By Christmas, these soldiers were manning 18 divisions, with 9 more soon to appear. The two weak mechanized regiments had grown into an armored corps of two divisions. The passage of the Selective Service Act, in effect, authorized a Regular Army of 500,000 men, a National Guard of 270,000 men, and an inductee population of 630,000 men for an aggregate strength of 1.4 million.<sup>55</sup>

Most of Marshall's time from September 1940 to June 1941 was spent in managing this enormous expansion. Facilities had to be erected, maneuvers had to be planned, recreational services had to be provided, and equipment had to be procured and distributed. It was a Herculean task which consumed the bulk of his time.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **TRAINING AND PRESERVING THE NEWBORN ARMY, 1941**

Marshall's relations with the Congress appeared more cordial than ever when he testified on behalf of a huge appropriations bill during the spring of 1941. Congress granted a record-breaking \$9.8 billion for fiscal year 1942. Amended to the accompanying text was mention of the "magnificent job" he was doing. However, a major crisis for the Army loomed on the horizon, one that would severely test the Chief of Staff's influence with Congress, his interpersonal skills, and his courage.<sup>56</sup>

Already in the fall of 1940, the War Department General Staff had surfaced concerns about the expiration of the National Guardsmen's Federal activation period of 1 year, as well as of the 1-year term of service for the inductees. Repeatedly throughout the first months of 1941, Marshall attempted to lay the groundwork with Congress and the President for extending both terms of service. The issue was a political hot potato which very few politicians wanted to handle.

For Marshall, however, the matter seriously threatened to undermine virtually everything of significance he had accomplished involving manpower mobilization. The Army had used draftees to fill out National Guard units, as well as most Regular Army ones. Only two Regular divisions continued to consist of strictly volunteers. Inductees, therefore, made up on the average of 25-50 percent of a division's manpower across most of the Army. Also, between 75-90 percent of each Regular division's officers were Reserve officers called to active duty when the Selective Service Act was implemented; their terms of service were legislatively tied to those of the National Guardsmen. Thus, about 600 Reserve

officers in every Regular division would be entitled to demobilize when the National Guardsmen did. Demobilization of the Guard and the inductees at their 1-year mark of individual service would emasculate the Army; the rump would form a disorganized, disjointed skeleton force incapable of responding to any sizable crisis for many months. The active force would go almost overnight from a robustly trained one to a largely ineffective, shattered one which would require rebuilding from the ground up. This development would set back the Army at least 1 1/2 years, perhaps 2. As Marshall commented later, "It meant the complete destruction...of the fabric of the army we had built up. We would be in a worse predicament than we were a year before."<sup>57</sup>

### **Forcing the Issue.**

Seeing the flow of international events as increasingly ominous, Marshall determined to force the issue. In courting a host of key congressmen, however, he soon discovered that few of them were willing to champion his cause. While many admitted privately the soundness of extending the National Guard and draft service terms from a purely military perspective, few were willing to pay the political price at the polls the following fall. The public, they feared, would regard any such extension as a breach of promise.

Finally, in mid-June, Marshall urged the President once again to ask Congress for the term extensions. Time was running out. Roosevelt, however, shied away from making the request. Deeply concerned, Marshall opted to take a bold step. He cleared the idea with the President of making some sort of public statement on his own recommending the extension.

Wrestling with the question of how to do so, he settled on a fairly creative approach. He could not make a direct, formal appeal to Congress without appearing to be disloyal by attempting to go around the President. At the same time, he did not want to appear as the mouthpiece of a President who himself was afraid to raise the issue. Marshall could, however, write a nonpolitical, formal report addressing the dire situation.

Previous chiefs of staff had, on occasion, produced annual reports discussing the posture of the Army at the end of the fiscal year. (The fiscal year ended on June 30 at this time.) Marshall had neglected to write one since becoming Chief of Staff, but there was still enough time for him to prepare a report before the end of June. He would appear to have dropped the annual report in favor of a more comprehensive biennial one. Addressed to the Secretary of War and releasable to the press, this report would be regarded as a legitimate and proper channel for Marshall to express himself impartially on the need for the service extensions. Consequently, he and his staff worked day and night to produce it.<sup>58</sup>

The report was skillfully prepared. In fewer than 40 pages, Marshall carefully laid out the situation. He used very understandable, nontechnical language, accompanied with simple, clear charts and maps to depict the Army's posture. After describing the enormous achievements made in the previous 2 years, he made a strong plea for the service extensions, lest the existing active forces evaporate.

He released the report to the press on July 3, hoping for a response. He got it almost immediately. The report was soon engulfed in a fire storm of controversy. First, Marshall had neglected to forewarn the administration's supporters in Congress; they felt blind-sided by the unexpected release of the report from out of the blue. Second, he had failed to construct a press release focusing attention on the points he wanted to highlight. As a result, the press not only dug out his argument but also focused on his use of the nebulous term "task forces," seeing in the use of the term the Army's veiled intent to form expeditionary forces to fight overseas. Isolationists and neutralists denounced this surmised suggestion with harsh words, many of which were aimed at a "warmongering Roosevelt." Two days later, the British commander retreating before Rommel in North Africa added fuel to the fire. He was quoted as saying that the British would soon receive the American supplies, equipment, *and manpower* they needed to prosecute the war successfully. Two days later, another British commander remarked publicly, "We certainly are going to need American manpower, just as

we did in the last war." These comments, perfectly ill-timed, seemed to confirm the worst suspicions for many about Marshall's "task forces."<sup>59</sup>

From this unpromising start, Marshall made a steady comeback. He quickly soothed ruffled congressional feathers with some artful explanations of his altruistic concerns and motives; he quickly won forgiveness and support from key Democratic leaders on the Hill now that the battle was joined. Then he addressed the controversial issue of task forces by assuring Congress publicly and privately that the term had a specific technical meaning which in no way implied the eventual use of American troops to fight abroad *a la World War I*. Task forces, he explained, were simply tailored groupings of units to accomplish given missions; they could refer to units of varying sizes, from a battalion to a corps. He had used the term in the report in connection with asking Congress to lift the existing ban on employing drafted soldiers outside the Western Hemisphere. He foresaw instances where "task forces" might be needed on short notice to perform contingencies outside the Hemisphere in response to immediate threats against U.S. interests; in such instances, the ban posed great organizational and planning problems. With the exception of two all-volunteer Regular divisions, no existing large formations could be sent without a major reorganization to strip out all inductees and replace them with Regulars from other outfits. From a military standpoint, this was a recipe for disaster which would destroy unit integrity across the entire Army on the verge of a deployment.

### **Convincing Congress.**

Marshall's explanation was too vague to overcome the distrust in many circles of the President's motives. Neutralist and isolationist sentiments regarded lifting the ban as tantamount to giving Roosevelt a "green light" to lead the United States into the war. Congressmen advised Marshall that the legislation had no chance of passage unless he dropped the request to lift the ban. He agonized at length. The ban hamstrung the Army profoundly in planning for contingencies; Marshall already knew, but couldn't yet

disclose, that the Army, for example, would take over the defense of Iceland from Britain in the near future. Without a lifting of the ban, the units designated to occupy the island would have to be completely reorganized. Would this gut-wrenching process be required on an ad hoc basis as each such contingency arose?

In this case, Marshall wisely applied the art of the possible. He correctly assessed that the congressional advice he had received was sound. It was more important to secure the term extensions, thereby keeping the Army from disintegrating. Marshall quickly recognized that he had no chance of doing so if he remained unyielding about the ban. Therefore, he reluctantly accepted a compromise dropping further discussion of the ban in return for the promise of broadened congressional support for the term extensions. It was a painful but necessary pill to swallow. In this instance, to have insisted on having the whole pie would most assuredly have led to having none.

As he continued to lobby Congress, Marshall discovered that much of the vehement opposition was directed against the President personally. In fact, significant numbers of both Republicans and alienated Democrats intended to vote against the measure on purely political grounds to embarrass what they regarded as an increasingly "dictatorial," high-handed President fixed on somehow involving the United States in another major war.<sup>60</sup>

Facing this opposition, the Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn, convinced the President and the Secretary of War that Marshall should personally lead the fight. Rayburn observed, "Of all the men who ever testified before any committee on which I served, there is no one of them who has the influence with a committee of the House that General Marshall has." After all, he had convinced enough congressmen the year before to vote for the nation's first ever peacetime draft, despite Rayburn's prediction that the votes were simply not there.

Thus, with only a brief Presidential radio message as support, virtually the entire burden of seeing the battle through



fell on Marshall's shoulders. At this point, few legislators would openly support the extensions. One congressional aide noted, "In forty years on the Hill he had never seen such fear of a bill." As Marshall later commented, "the trouble was we were undertaking very severe war measures and we were not at war."<sup>61</sup>

During the ensuing month, the Chief of Staff testified repeatedly before committees of both houses of Congress. In the process, he emphasized critical themes which profoundly softened the opposition and transformed the debate to a higher level than that of pure politics. The selection and articulation of those themes demonstrated considerable sophistication in the art of persuasion, meriting a more detailed analysis.

First, Marshall argued that the effort to seek the extensions was his initiative alone, born of a genuine concern for the military security of the country. He told the House:

My recommendations were based on military necessity only, and I was especially concerned that they be made in a manner that was clearly nonpolitical. I consulted no one with respect to them and no one knew I was going to make them. I thought that my action was in the best interests of national defense.

He made a similar statement to the Senate:

I made the specific recommendations regarding the extension...purely on the basis of a military necessity for the security of the country. The Commander in Chief, that is, the President, had no knowledge that I was going to make them. My report was submitted to the Secretary of War and at the same time was released to the press.

He went on to say that he had tried to keep as wide a separation as possible between military necessity, the sole basis for his recommendations, and "political considerations which are matters for the decision of the President and the Congress." He further submitted "that the question of readiness for service in the Army should not be confused with those political considerations."<sup>62</sup>

Next, Marshall emphasized the gravity of the moment. "The declaration of an emergency does not create it," he

testified. "An emergency exists whether or not Congress declares it. I am asking you to recognize the fact—the fact that the national interest is imperiled and that an emergency exists. I am not asking you to manufacture a fact." He then proceeded to describe the adverse impacts on the Army if the extensions were not approved, noting that such actions would leave the nation largely defenseless in the face of uncertain, unsettling developments abroad. He went on to expand this thought before a Senate committee:

...In view of the international situation and its rapidly increasing threat to our security, I submit, on the basis of cold logic, that the virtual disbandment or immobilization of two-thirds of our enlisted strength and three-fourths of our trained officer personnel at this time might well involve a national tragedy.<sup>63</sup>

Then Marshall went on with a comment that hit hard at something near and dear to Congress—the continuing vitality of the National Guard. He pointed out that if the National Guardsmen were sent home *en masse*, they would have to be replaced permanently by Regular Army units over time. "It will eliminate the National Guard from further serious consideration as a factor in the national defense," he told the House. "It will have to be placed in a much lower category for the immediate defense of this country, and it would be necessary to maintain large forces of some other kind." This thought was extremely sobering for Congress, and one prone to give pause.<sup>64</sup>

Marshall then struck several other themes that made good sense. He did not see any immediate need for additional increases in forces. Rather, he wanted to focus on improving the quality of the existing divisions, something that could only be done if the term extensions were granted. He told a House committee, "We prefer to have our existing units reach as high a state of efficiency as possible, rather than to take them apart, spread them into a larger number, and start all over again." In addition, he didn't intend to keep inductees or National Guardsmen on active duty indefinitely. They would be released on a case-by-case basis, but in a way to allow their gradual replacement by new inductees so as to minimize personnel turbulence and the associated adverse impacts on

unit readiness and training. To do so, he wanted to be able to use his own judgement in applying a flexible rule rather than wearing the straightjacket of meeting a mandatory deadline for all at once. In this regard, he appealed to the confidence of Congress in him personally. He said, "You must trust in my good faith, in our professional common sense. I have tried to be very frank. The War Department has been scrupulous in its efforts to meet, as far as possible, the desires of Congress. Though encompassed with too definite and too numerous laws, we have not tried circumlocution or evasion." In short, he appealed to the great store of good will he had built up with the Congress in the previous 2 years.<sup>65</sup>

Marshall then made a connection with something he had consistently emphasized before Congress—the concept of proceeding in a deliberate, measured, businesslike manner to develop appropriate military forces. To send all the Guard units and initial inductees home at once flew in the face of such an approach—an approach Congress had come to embrace increasingly over time through Marshall's many testimonies.<sup>66</sup>

At this point, under congressional advice, Marshall agreed to another compromise. With the President's approval, he accepted an amendment which limited the term extensions to a maximum individual service of 18 months. This timely compromise made the whole issue more palatable to the public and greatly improved the promise of the bill's passage, although he had earlier opposed this restriction most vehemently.<sup>67</sup>

As the time to vote neared, Marshall increased his lobbying efforts, especially with the House; there significant opposition remained. Notably, he pleaded with 40 key Republican members for 5 hours, invoking appeals to both logic and patriotism. About 12 were clearly moved at that point to declare support for the measure, even though they thought such support would cost them the next election.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, Marshall successfully argued against a counterplan proposed by House Republicans and some antladministration Democrats. It sought to shift responsibility from the Congress to the President for extending the inductees' terms of service.

Under the provisions of the Selective Service Act, draftees could be discharged into the Reserve. Then, as members of the Reserve, they could be recalled by Presidential authority alone into active service for an additional 12 months. Marshall strongly opposed this approach for what it would be regarded—an evasion of congressional responsibility. He emphasized, "I think it would have a most unfortunate effect on morale....We would give our men the feeling that we were taking some unfair though legal advantage of them." His arguments found the mark. The counterplan was dropped.<sup>69</sup>

On August 7, the Senate voted, 54-30, to support the term extensions. Everyone expected the subsequent House vote to be a real squeaker. It was. On August 12, the House voted, 203-202, in favor of the resolution to extend the terms of service. The Army had been saved by a single vote.<sup>70</sup>

Marshall's role in this whole episode was absolutely pivotal. Faced with a serious situation most politicians wanted to avoid, he forced the issue into the open public forum. He did so by the brilliant and creative maneuver of issuing a biennial report when all other doors of formal communication seemed closed. Despite some missteps surrounding the report's issuance, he made a rapid recovery. He alone shouldered the administration's burden of arguing for the term extensions before Congress, transforming a no-win situation into a winning one. He did so by striking a series of convincing themes, which gave congressmen enough solid ground to justify voting for the extensions. He also executed a superb, behind-the-scenes lobbying effort and demonstrated impressive skills at striking timely compromises. His growing circle of civilian, and especially congressional, contacts also played a key role. Important to note, Marshall's persuasive talents were not applied manipulatively; he never sought to mislead or deceive. What he said, he meant fully from the mind or from the heart. When he appealed on altruistic grounds, he acted from altruistic motives. This approach gave him a moral high ground and a strength of character which greatly deepened the respect which Congress already had for him. If he was the architect of the Army as it existed in July 1941, he was the savior of that Army as it

continued to exist beyond September. His will and his efforts had made the difference.

### **The GHQ Maneuvers of 1941.**

The late summer and early fall saw the fruition of Marshall's efforts in another arena. He had carefully planned a series of large-unit exercises which far eclipsed those of the previous year. He gave these exercises particular emphasis. Corps maneuvers were staged separately during August in the Second and Third Army areas. Then these forces joined others in Louisiana and Texas during September for field army-level exercises which made a deep impression on the country. Nearly 400,000 men participated. Paratroops were used in exercises for the first time, as was an armored corps in full maneuver with tanks over extended distances. The Chief of Staff was pleased at the demonstrated improvement in the ground forces. Finally, in November, the First Army and the IV Armored Corps maneuvered in the Carolinas, showing still further improvement.<sup>71</sup>

Thus, as Pearl Harbor approached, Marshall had in 1941 both kept the Army together and intensified its training. These stunning achievements did not come easily; they resulted from enormous efforts and struggles, in the cause of which George Marshall exercised remarkably competent leadership at the highest levels of government.

## CHAPTER 6

### RELATIONS WITH THE CONGRESS

As previously outlined, Marshall established a progressively effective and influential relationship with Congress during the period, 1939-41. He developed this relationship gradually without much outside assistance from the rest of the Executive Branch, and tempered it with several controversial legislative campaigns. Later on, Marshall would be declared as *Time Magazine's* "Man of the Year" for 1943. In the caption article, *Time* said the following about the Chief of Staff:

Never in U.S. history has a military man enjoyed such respect on Capitol Hill. One reason is that he...is completely free of political concerns. When Colorado's Senator Edwin C. Johnson mentioned him as a Presidential possibility, General Marshall's negative reaction was so unmistakably genuine that Congress knew: this man is a trustee for the nation.

During World War II, the Congress continued to cooperate almost instinctively and unquestioningly with the proposals of General Marshall. The basis for this special relationship was firmly anchored in the experiences of 1939 to 1941.<sup>72</sup>

Above all, Marshall saw himself as the loyal servant of the Republic and the Constitution which served as its framework. He fully trusted in the concept of military subordination to civilian authority, and displayed enormous respect and deference both to Congress and his civilian superiors. He fully accepted the notion that the burden to articulate persuasively the country's security needs rested squarely on the shoulders of its military and naval leaders. He emphasized this point in December 1939 during a speech before the American Historical Association: "In our democracy where the government is truly an agent of the popular will, military policy is dependent on public opinion, and our organization for war

will be good or bad as the public is well informed or poorly informed regarding the factors that bear on the subject." About two months earlier in another speech, he had remarked: "The great problem we have in going before Congress is one of being able to present simply and understandably the general requirements and respective priorities."<sup>73</sup>

For this reason, Marshall prepared assiduously for any testimony before congressional committees. He purged from his remarks virtually all confusing technical terms, acronyms, and military jargon. He always attempted to communicate in a style that the average man on the street could understand.

He continued to have great faith in Congress and the public. If they were properly and completely informed, he felt, they would make generally sound decisions about military policy. For this reason, Congress was not the enemy. Rather, congressmen were loyal Americans generally trying to do the right things as they understood them. To staff members who wanted to avoid potentially embarrassing revelations to a Senate Committee, Marshall remarked, "It seems to me that a free and easy and whole-souled manner of cooperation with these committees is more likely to create an impression that everything is all right in the War Department, than is a resentful attitude." He continued, "...it must be assumed that members of Congress are just as patriotic as we ....I do not believe that we should adopt an attitude of official nervousness." On another occasion, he noted "that 95 percent of the members of Congress were worthy of his high regard." Thus, Marshall's approach to Congress was founded from the beginning on respect and deference rather than fear or apprehension. He welcomed opportunities to go before Congress to get his points across, and he brought to all congressional relations a deeply genuine spirit of cooperation that made a profoundly positive impression even on congressmen who opposed the main thrusts of his proposals.<sup>74</sup>

### **Congressional Committees.**

Marshall's performance before congressional committees was impressive for other reasons as well. First, he habitually

spoke without any notes. He did so consciously for effect, as he later recalled, "because I found that the minute you began to read you lost your audience." It was better to forget something." This technique also had another impact. It clearly helped establish Marshall as an "expert," the man clearly at the military helm in the War Department. His words were his words, not words written by someone else to be read before the committee. They were spoken with conviction and with piercing eye contact. This approach, coupled with his clarity of expression and mastery of associated facts or considerations, immeasurably enhanced his credibility. He was clearly someone "in charge" who knew what he was trying to do. This impression, combined with his ability to think on his feet, rapidly established Marshall's credentials as a man of considerable intellectual capacity, a quality congressmen inherently respected and admired.<sup>75</sup>

Second, his manner and mood in testimony were always correct, given his ingrained respect for the institution. He always asked or proposed, but never demanded. He was never arrogant. He avoided talking down to congressmen. He demonstrated an often disarming frankness in answering questions or admitting problems. He avoided any effort to manipulate, obfuscate, or deceive; his responses were honest and straight-forward, even if they damaged his immediate cause. Marshall felt that long-term trust and confidence from Congress were infinitely more valuable than any short-term benefits acquired deceitfully. Besides, Marshall's own moral code rejected any sort of dishonest behavior. He also displayed an enormous capacity for patience under questioning that was frequently less than sympathetic or intelligent. In this regard, he demonstrated great restraint, never losing his temper or becoming emotionally distraught.<sup>76</sup>

Third, he strictly refused to be drawn into the realm of political considerations. His approach was that of a military servant of the Republic who was concerned only with the military considerations for the nation's security. He clearly communicated on several occasions that he was his own person, not another mouthpiece for the administration. He pointed out to Congress that the President and he did not



always see eye-to-eye on needed appropriations. Incidentally, he did this in a way which dispelled the notion that the President was a War Hawk or Warmonger, as he was often accused of being by his adversaries; the President always emerged with a flattered image from such revelations. This general approach often transformed debates about specific issues from a partisan to a bipartisan level of consideration, something few others in the Executive Branch could achieve at the time.

Fourth, Marshall came across as one uninterested in personal fame, recognition, or gain. He generally refused press interviews and discouraged writings about himself. His manner before Congress was exceptionally modest and self-effacing. He never bragged or boasted, but rather pursued his duties in a quiet, sober, intense fashion. Even his famous biennial report of 1941 downplayed his monumental personal role in building up the Army. From time to time, he quickly suppressed suggestions that he seek public office, even perhaps the Presidency in the future. To Congress, Marshall was a man without political ambitions.<sup>77</sup>

Fifth, Marshall repeatedly made it clear that his requested military increases were not motivated by any desire to involve the country in war. "I am more of a pacifist than you think," he told one subcommittee. "I went through one war, and I do not want to see another." Nor were his proposals aimed at empire building, or increasing the Army for its own sake, as he stated convincingly to Senator Truman's committee in 1940:

There is not the slightest thought in any of our minds of trying to utilize this emergency to aggrandize the Army, or of making exorbitant demands to put something over, as it were, under the pressure of the situation.

These sentiments gradually raised his stature in the minds of many congressmen to that of a "trusted honest broker" in administering the security needs of the nation.<sup>78</sup>

### **Acting in Good Faith.**

In dealing with congressional matters, Marshall invested enormous chunks of his valuable time. If a congressman asked for a time to visit to discuss something, Marshall made it a habit to go to the congressman. He personally reviewed most of the replies to congressional inquiries. Eventually he established a Legislative and Liaison Division, headed by a general officer, on the General Staff to assist him with handling the ever increasing incidence of congressional questions and requests. Showing such deference to Congress only increased its favorable impression of him as a man who always acted in good faith and in a genuine, cooperative spirit.<sup>79</sup>

Showing such deference to Congress, however, did not mean that Marshall was unwilling to say "no" to inappropriate requests or appeals. Time and time again, he strictly refused requests for such things as "political" promotions, appointments or assignments for congressional acquaintances. One example in particular illustrates this. In the fall of 1941, the Army was deeply into the process of identifying and purging incompetent and overage officers, especially senior officers, from its ranks. Two of the officers so identified just happened to be generals from the Texas National Guard. They had been recently sent home and retired. Marshall had personally reviewed their cases and was absolutely convinced, based on extensive evaluations, that they should be retired. Subsequently, Senator Tom Connally of Texas raised a storm of protest directly to the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of War. This was a fundamental matter of principle to Marshall. He refused to give any ground whatsoever, explaining in great detail the basis for his original decision. The Senator quickly realized that he was treading on shaky ground and relented; he came away with an even higher regard for Marshall's competence, honesty, moral courage, integrity and strength of character. This and a host of like incidents made it clear that Marshall was no soft touch. When it came to core principles, he was as tough as they got. And it was this quality which tremendously increased congressional respect and admiration for him over time.<sup>80</sup>

In summary, the Chief of Staff's high regard for congressmen as partners, not adversaries, in the democratic process led him to establish a cooperative working relationship based on mutual respect. He did not fight the process. He worked very hard at this. He kept the congressional relationship as businesslike and nonpolitical as he could. He sought to act always in good faith toward Congress, showing deference, respect, honesty, frankness, and responsiveness. At the same time, he was his own person, who refused to yield the high ground on fundamental matters, especially involving inappropriate influence or other ethical matters. In short, his relationship with Congress was cordial but reservedly dignified. In return, Congress bestowed upon him greater trust and confidence. An example of this from a Senate hearing over appropriations in May 1940 is insightful. Senator Commins said, "... we want this money spent properly and we believe you are going to spend it properly." Senator Powers followed by remarking, "May I say in closing, General Marshall—and I say this in all reverence—I think this committee and this Congress has just got to trust in God and General Marshall to see that these funds are expended properly." What made such trust and confidence so enduring was that Marshall worked tirelessly to live up to expectations.<sup>81</sup>

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **INSTITUTIONAL VALUES**

Marshall brought to his duties as Chief of Staff several deeply ingrained values which he chose to emphasize across the institution. Among the more prominent were efficiency, responsiveness, teamwork, initiative, and morale. His emphasis on these was, by and large, gradual and low-key, and initially involved those most immediately associated with him, members of the War Department General Staff and subordinate commanders.

#### **Efficiency and Responsiveness.**

The notion of efficiency was for Marshall inseparable from that of professionalism, responsibility, and stewardship. He himself felt the heavy burden of responsibility for the avoidance of "waste" and for the efficient use of resources granted him by Congress and the President. He soon discovered as Chief of Staff that the tempo of War Department actions and activities was increasing in quantum-leap fashion as the process of mobilization began to gear up. This increased tempo, combined with an antiquated War Department organization which centralized virtually all major decision making around the Chief of Staff, placed overwhelming demands on his time. Unable to reorganize the Department radically for the present, Marshall chose to emphasize efficiency, the application of which was intended to save time, energy, and physical resources.<sup>82</sup>

First, to emphasize the urgency surrounding the need for efficient operations, Marshall told new officers reporting to the War Department as early as the summer of 1939 that they should consider their jobs "as war assignments" and "approach their problems as if they were at war."<sup>83</sup>

From his staff he subsequently demanded concise, articulate reports and studies which addressed issues in a frank, straight-forward fashion. He was exceptionally impatient of excess verbiage and set very high standards in this regard, especially for any correspondence prepared for his signature. Briefings were expected to be short and to the point. He grew irritated at the slightest sign of muddled thinking or articulation. He expected issues to be presented to him logically, lucidly, and succinctly. Those presenting staff papers were expected to understand them thoroughly and to make recommendations for final action, whether or not they had actually authored the papers.<sup>84</sup>

Second, in Marshall's mind, responsiveness and attention to detail were inseparable from efficiency. With regard to this, he wanted senior level staffs to respond rapidly and thoroughly to the needs of units in the field. In January 1940, preparing for his first scheduled series of maneuvers, Marshall sent a memorandum to the General Staff:

The concentration of troops in the field amounts to a partial mobilization of the regular establishment of the Army....Therefore, action which affects the comfort, efficiency, or unhampered operation of these units, whether originating in the field or in the War Department, will be followed through to its conclusion by the responsible officer of the Staff, or of the arm or service concerned, to avoid the inevitable delays incident to routine procedure, and to insure that the interests of the troops and the training objectives are given the desired priority.

He wrote a few months later to the Commandant of the Infantry School,

...we must effect a decided change in the state of mind of all staff officers...to the end that anything that concerns troops in the field will be considered as of more importance than any other matter to be handled at the moment. Also, that the officer first concerned will feel a definite responsibility to speed the matter on its way in the most effective fashion.

He also wrote in other correspondence about "the necessity for guarding against the bureaucratic self-satisfied state of mind."

He used his Inspector General (IG) frequently to search through the War Department looking for just such conditions. Later that same year, he even asked his IG to "look into the business of expediting War Department administration by checking up on the possible advantage of some rearrangement being made in the conduct of offices pertaining to receiving, recording, and distribution of papers." In the interest of responsiveness, Marshall directed that all communication within the General Staff be condensed in the basic document to a single page, simply worded.<sup>85</sup>

In this connection, Marshall focused his attention beyond the General Staff. He made frequent inspection trips across the Army, always looking especially for signs of inefficiency. He initiated corrective action immediately, and usually followed up to ensure that the corrective action had been effective. His letter in March 1941 to Brigadier General John P. Smith, Commander of the 4th Corps Area, accurately conveys the spirit of his intent:

...now I am rather fixed in the belief that some of the [corps] headquarters are not functioning at the speed demanded by the emergency. There is too much of the time-clock procedure....The last has been a frequent criticism of your headquarters from any number of directions. I am inclined to think that several of your staff are not sufficiently aggressive, energetic, and far-seeing.<sup>86</sup>

### **Teamwork.**

The third value to be highlighted is teamwork. For Marshall, the concept was multidimensional. It applied first and foremost to that coordination and cooperation within the Army needed to build effective combined-arms formations capable of operating effectively in battle. Marshall was constantly striking the theme that "success in combat depends primarily upon the development of the trained combat team composed of all arms."

Branch parochialism would immediately get one in hot water with Marshall. He encouraged officers to develop a broader understanding of how various branches could operate together for greater overall effect. As early as 1938, while still

Deputy Chief of Staff, he told the students and faculty at the opening of the Air Corps Tactical School to work in that direction:

Military victories are not gained by a single arm—though the failures of an arm might well be disastrous—but are achieved through the efforts of all arms and services welded into an Army team.

He continued that many of the students would later be called upon to fill positions as principal staff officers or as higher commanders with mixed forces—"positions," he emphasized, "which require an intimate knowledge of the combined arms, and a breadth of vision impossible to the man who devotes his entire interest to a single arm." To stimulate such thinking, for example, Marshall attached pilots from the Advanced Flying School to ground force commanders of companies, batteries, and troops during the 1940 maneuvers.<sup>87</sup>

Teamwork also meant coordination and cooperation within the General Staff. This flowed naturally as well from the value of efficiency. Marshall expected the various elements of the staff to share information readily which applied to other elements and to coordinate thoroughly across the staff all reports, studies, or issue papers coming to him for decision. An uncooperative attitude in this sense was the undoing of many a staff officer, whose days were often quickly numbered as a result. In addition, the staff was expected to communicate decisions and actions taken so that a coordinated follow-up effort could be made to ensure proper and full implementation. Marshall had a comprehensive memory. Any staff officer who presented him a problem about which he had previously made a decision was likely to receive "something akin to a verbal flaying."<sup>88</sup>

A third dimension of teamwork applied to interservice cooperation with the Navy. As previously discussed, Marshall worked hard to develop a strong cooperative relationship with the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Stark. He also emphasized to his staff the importance of cordial interservice relations on a staff-to-staff basis, especially regarding joint

planning. Staff officers who were inherently hostile to the Navy found themselves quickly dismissed from the General Staff. The emphasis he placed on the mutual planning and execution of joint Army-Navy maneuvers in early 1940 drove home the point. To make waves with the Navy, especially to be undiplomatic or tactless, was considered a serious incident. In this connection, his letter to the new Army commander in Hawaii, written in February 1941, reflected this attitude:

Please keep clearly in mind in all your negotiations that our mission is to protect the base and the naval concentration [at Pearl Harbor], and that purpose should be made clearly apparent to Admiral Kimmell. I accentuate this because I found yesterday...in a matter of extreme importance, that old Army and Navy feuds, engendered from fights over appropriations, with the usual fallacious arguments on both sides, still persist in confusing issues of national defense. We must be completely impersonal in these matters....<sup>89</sup>

#### **Initiative.**

Initiative is the fourth value to be highlighted. Marshall felt strongly that modern, mobile warfare required fast- and creative-thinking leaders who were willing to make decisions in the absence of detailed orders or instructions. In his more immediate surroundings in Washington, he wanted his staff to take the initiative whenever it could to resolve problems at the lowest level possible. During the 1920s and early 1930s, General Staff procedure and tradition drove virtually every substantial issue to the very top of the War Department for resolution. Marshall abhorred this practice. He wanted men who would make sound decisions, given general policy guidance, and then act on them in their own spheres of responsibility. The ideal here was speed and efficiency, both of which were lost when all decisions were deferred to the very highest uniformed authority in the War Department. When Eisenhower reported to the General Staff in 1941, Marshall told him bluntly: "...the Department is filled with able men who analyze their problems well but feel compelled always to bring them to me for final solution. I must have assistants who will solve their own problems and tell me later what they have done." Marshall was extremely tolerant of honest mistakes



born of taking initiative and usually supported and encouraged subordinates, although, as they gained in experience, he expected fewer errors.<sup>90</sup>

Marshall especially valued subordinates taking the initiative in arguing against his positions or proposed courses of action. They helped him immeasurably to see issues from many angles so that when the final decision was made, it was based on a thorough analysis. He despised "yes-men." Soon after Omar Bradley became one of Marshall's assistants in 1940, he and the other assistants were called in before the Chief. "Gentlemen," he said, "I'm disappointed in you. You haven't yet disagreed with a single decision I've made." Bradley replied that they had had no occasion to disagree, but when they did, they would speak up. In the future they did. However, Marshall had made his point, emphasizing the value he wished his assistants to internalize.<sup>91</sup>

### **Morale.**

The fifth value to be highlighted was critical for Marshall, that of morale. Perhaps his most fundamental statement on the topic came in November 1939 during a speech before the Community Chest Committee in the nation's capital. "As a professional soldier," he stated, "I know that high morale is the strongest and most powerful factor in the Army, just as lack of morale will bring about the defeat of almost any army however well armed." On another occasion, he remarked that "morale...is the most important factor in the makeup of an Army."<sup>92</sup>

Soldier morale was a function of many things. It involved caring leaders who persistently looked after their men's welfare and who helped attack the great destroyers of morale—Inadequate creature comforts, boredom, and a sense of unfair treatment. It also involved public support, especially for civilian-soldiers called to active duty—Reserve officers, draftees, and National Guardsmen.<sup>93</sup>

Marshall made morale a headline topic in the Army. He constantly stressed to commanders their obligations to build and maintain sound morale as one of their primary command

responsibilities. He secured considerable funding for recreational facilities and closely monitored progress around the country in building them. During his many inspection trips, considerations of morale and associated programs were among his priority agenda items. Finally, in early 1941, he established a Morale Branch on the General Staff and placed a general officer in charge. Its purpose was to coordinate morale-related activities, needs, and services more efficiently across the entire Army. At the same time, he required every headquarters down to, and including, the division level to establish a morale officer as a full-time special staff officer. His intent was "to bring forcibly to the attention of all Army personnel and commanders the extreme importance of the matter." He wanted commanders to give considerations of morale their close, personal, continuing attention. "Since it is rather intangible," he wrote to an Army Commander in 1941, "it requires considerable initiative, authority, and imaginative thinking. It usually happened that the other more tangible duties were carried out, and little time was left for the much more important question of morale."<sup>84</sup>

By and large, Marshall succeeded in institutionalizing the values of efficiency, responsiveness, teamwork, initiative, and morale. He especially succeeded in inculcating those values in the bright, young, promising leaders who worked closely with him during the period, 1939-41. Genuine reflection of those values was certainly a central consideration for promotion and advancement. Among those leaders appeared such names as Eisenhower, Bradley, Smith, Ridgeway, Gerow, Collins, Arnold, Clark, Taylor, Eichelberger, McNair, and Spaatz.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **SHAPING THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

As previously discussed, Marshall envisioned two primary developments with regard to War Department restructuring. First, he wanted a General Staff which dealt primarily with issues of broad policy and which could make decentralized decisions on routine matters flowing from policy guidance; he also wanted a staff which could comprehensively and responsively focus on key issues and follow-up on decisions across staff lines of interest. He wanted an efficient operation which filtered out unnecessary clutter with which he had to deal so he could concentrate on weightier concerns. In short, he wanted a setup whereby he made decisions only involving issues truly appropriate to his level of responsibility. He desired subordinates to make most decisions in lesser matters. Second, he foresaw Army Air Forces operating for the immediate future with something approximating autonomy inside the War Department; at the same time, he wanted those forces to forge a closer and more cooperative relationship with the ground forces, especially in areas of mutual concern such as planning and operations.<sup>95</sup>

Marshall did not work with detailed blueprints in hand. Enlightened trial and error more aptly describes the process. He tried several approaches, some of which just didn't turn out very well. But in the end, by early 1942, he had largely realized his objectives. Soon after entering the war, America had a streamlined War Department organization vastly improved over that of 1939 and capable of efficient strategic direction over multiple theaters of war. America also entered the war with strong, centralized, autonomous Air Forces which were, at the same time, an integrated component of the Army's combined-arms team.

## **Autonomy for Army Air.**

When Marshall became Chief of Staff, he had to deal with enormous animosities within the Army between air and ground officers, especially evident in Washington. There were very few air officers on the General Staff, which itself fluctuated from indifference to hostility regarding air matters. Influential air officers, on the other hand, spurned by the rest of the Army and inspired by successful examples of independent air forces abroad, lobbied Congress for independence and found significant resonance there. It was a mess.<sup>96</sup>

Marshall endeavored to move more air officers into the General Staff. He had difficulty, however, finding air officers qualified to serve on the Staff by virtue of graduating from the Army War College. Nonetheless, he moved in as many as he could find. One of the most important was a former temporary Major General and head of the Air Corps, then-Colonel Frank Andrews. Marshall had him promoted to Brigadier General and assigned as the G3 of the General Staff, in charge of training across the entire Army. Andrews was the first aviator to hold such a prestigious position on the Staff, and he performed there exceptionally well.<sup>97</sup>

At the same time, Marshall pushed ground officers on the Staff to develop a greater appreciation for air by flying to distant posts for inspection trips. Some refused on the grounds that private insurance companies at that time would not cover travel by such a hazardous mode. Nonetheless, Marshall continued to apply pressure. After a while, officers who persisted in refusing to fly found themselves quietly reassigned. As Marshall said years later, "...if you came in there, you flew." Also quickly reassigned were ground officers who continued to display a condescending or hostile attitude toward air officers. In both instances, Marshall drove home his point. He expected cooperation, teamwork, and mutual respect between the ground and the air.<sup>98</sup>

Marshall worked as well in subtler ways. He ensured that air perspectives and concerns were articulated in staff meetings and that air interests were generally promoted in decision making. He clearly supported Air Corps expansion

programs, including the acquisition of heavy bombers along with aircraft capable of providing direct support to ground troops. In this way, he cast a somewhat transparent but nonetheless effective, protective umbrella around the Air Corps.<sup>99</sup>

The Chief of Staff also established a particularly close relationship with then-Major General "Hap" Arnold, who had become Chief of the Air Corps in 1938. Arnold agreed fully with Marshall's designs for the Air Corps, and became a faithful collaborator. Marshall was deeply impressed with Arnold's abilities, both as a leader and an administrator. He ensured that Arnold increasingly got opportunities to express his views to the Secretary of War and the President, thereby helping him establish credible credentials as the nation's chief spokesman and advocate for air power. He also gave Arnold ever increasing latitude to develop Army aviation across a broad spectrum of activities.<sup>100</sup>

In the summer of 1940, Marshall activated General Headquarters (GHQ) in Washington. The concept of this headquarters emerged from post-World War I studies which recommended a staff comparable to Pershing's GHQ which could organize and lead a large expeditionary force into a theater of operations. The General Staff's War Plans Division was supposed to form the core of this headquarters. In concept, the Chief of Staff, or some other commander designated by the President, was supposed to use this headquarters to take the nation's field forces overseas in war *a la Pershing*. Of course, the plan assumed that the next war would follow the pattern of the previous one, a war in a single theater of operations. The dramatic Nazi victories in the spring of 1940 gave enormous impetus to large-scale mobilization of American forces in the months that followed. Marshall, increasingly overwhelmed by detail, decided to activate GHQ, entrusting to it the associated training function. While in name the Commander of GHQ, Marshall delegated its day-to-day operations to a trusted subordinate, Major General Lesley McNair, who was named chief of staff, GHQ. McNair was charged to direct the training of the tactical units of the Army, found primarily in the four field armies and the armored force.

This move greatly relieved Marshall from a crushing load of detail and transferred it to what, in effect, functioned as a subordinate headquarters with McNair fully in charge.

The new GHQ continued to relieve both Marshall and the General Staff of a whole host of problems associated with induction and training, but the remaining demands continued to grow until they all but consumed his available time. Finally, in November 1940, Marshall moved to expand the number of Deputy Chiefs of Staff from one to three. One deputy, as before, was responsible for "all matters incident to General Staff business"; one deputy was made responsible for questions involving supply, equipment, construction, and the Armored Force; the third was responsible for air issues. To this last position, Marshall appointed "Hap" Arnold, who retained his title and functions as Chief of the Air Corps. This arrangement, although still far from ideal, relieved Marshall of considerable time-consuming detail work, with the three deputies now better able to filter, clarify, and often resolve issues before they had to go to him. The Air Corps rejoiced, for now their chief had both a greatly elevated status and the consequent entree associated with it. Things were looking up. The Air Corps seemed to be marching steadily toward greater autonomy.<sup>101</sup>

This rejoicing, however, was short-lived. Two weeks later, Marshall removed the General Headquarters Air Force (GHQ Air Force) from under the jurisdiction of the Chief of the Air Corps and subordinated it to the GHQ run by McNair. Since the GHQ Air Force was charged with planning and conducting unit training and combat operations, the move made considerable organizational sense, given the GHQ's overall training function in the States and its potential command function overseas. However, from the view of most air leaders, the reorganization separated the materiel and individual training functions administered through the Air Corps from the unit training and combat operation function handled by GHQ Air Force. Thus, the basic air functions were organizationally separated. Marshall had hoped that Arnold, in his dual capacity, could effectively coordinate the activities of the two divided components of Army aviation. Actually Arnold did a

superb job trying. But nobody was really satisfied with the arrangement, which was aborted 7 months later.<sup>102</sup>

In the interim, Marshall gave the air an enormous boost toward greater autonomy in the staff realm. The Chief of Staff observed with growing frustration that the air establishment was "battered around in a maelstrom," organizationally trying to coordinate its issues among the various General Staff sections, where air matters at best were regarded as peripheral concerns. Marshall finally responded in March 1941 with a simple directive, in effect directing the Chief of the Air Corps thereafter to prepare for final action all papers, studies, memoranda, and other actions relating to purely Air Corps matters except those pertaining to war plans and intelligence. In addition, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Air was told to coordinate all air matters, to include those previously handled by the senior Deputy Chief of Staff under the rubric of "General Staff business." Marshall based this action on the need for improved efficiency, given the upcoming increases in demands on the Air Corps tied to expansion programs. The Chief of Staff also emphatically told the G1, G3, and G4 not to delay matters affecting the air establishment.<sup>103</sup>

The second and third-order consequences of this simple directive were profound. First, the staff of the Air Corps acquired a degree of coordinating authority approaching that of the General Staff sections. As a result, it would play a more central role in planning activities and enjoy a more elevated status than before within the War Department. Second, the authority of both the Air Corps and the Deputy Chief of Staff for Air was significantly expanded. Third, air issues would be handled more expeditiously and cooperatively than ever before by the General Staff. These results, which were consciously intended by Marshall, amounted to a turning point in the movement for autonomy of the air establishment.<sup>104</sup>

Increasingly dissatisfied with the divided aviation functions, Marshall and the Secretary of War in March 1941 decided to place the entire air arm under a single commander. Marshall initiated a study of how best to do this, and encouraged Mr. Stimson to revive the position of Assistant Secretary of War for Air. Secretary Stimson did so almost immediately and

appointed Robert A Lovett, who had been serving as special assistant on air matters, to the position. His charter involved two major tasks: promotion of aircraft production and streamlining the organization of the air arm. The reestablishment of this position elevated even further the stature and priority linked with air matters within the War Department.

In June, the new reorganization of the air arm went into effect in accordance with a revised version of Army Regulation 95-5 (Status, Functions, and Organization of the Air Component). The regulation established the Army Air Forces (AAF). Its chief, General Arnold, was given control over two subordinate organizations: the Air Corps and the Air Force Combat Command (AFCC), the latter replacing the old GHQ Air Force. Thus, administration, logistics, and combat operations were all placed under Arnold's purview. In addition, Arnold, as Chief of the AAF, was made directly responsible to the Chief of Staff and given authority to establish comprehensive plans and policies for *all* aspects of Army aviation. In keeping with Marshall's vision for both greater decentralization within the War Department and greater air establishment autonomy, the regulation provided the AAF with an Air Staff to assist in policy formulation. General Arnold also retained his position as Deputy Chief of Staff for Air, serving as a high-level bridge between the AAF and the General Staff. GHQ's responsibility for air force training was limited to combined air-ground operations on those occasions when air task forces would be attached, such as for maneuvers or for overseas deployment.<sup>105</sup>

The impact of this reorganization was enormous. It raised Arnold to unquestioned and unprecedented preeminence in all air matters. Specifically, his duties encompassed determining requirements for the AAF and the "preparation of necessary plans for the development, organization, equipment, training, tactical operations, supply, and maintenance thereof, including overseas garrisons and task forces for theaters of operation and the assignment of personnel and materiel thereto." Through the AFCC, he controlled "all aerial operations" save for units assigned or attached to task forces, overseas



garrisons, or other commands. He was also responsible for planning the air defense of the United States. The broadened scope of these duties also ensured promotion for him to lieutenant general. Brigadier General Gerow, head of the War Plans Division of the General Staff, noted in his office diary that the airmen had gained "a complete autonomy similar in character to that exercised by the Marine Corps of the Navy."<sup>106</sup>

Unfortunately, however, the GHQ and the AAF continued to dispute their somewhat overlapping operational responsibilities. Smelling even greater opportunities, some on the new Air Staff offered a series of proposals for total independence of the Air Forces inside a National Defense establishment. Marshall and Arnold rejected these. But, Marshall gradually concluded that GHQ would not be suited to exercise direction over theater level commands overseas; rather, a streamlined and redesigned General Staff would be the more appropriate instrument.<sup>107</sup>

### **Reorganizing the War Department.**

Nonetheless, Marshall was reluctant to initiate a sweeping reorganization of the General Staff in late 1941. He knew generally what he wanted. But, as he recalled a few months later, "...the difficulty was how to bring it about without so much...dissention and opposition within the Army and on the Hill and in the press that I would be stirring up a most unfortunate morale situation at a critical moment and would also be defeating my purpose." Thus, Marshall chose to refine reorganization studies and plans for the present, awaiting a more propitious opportunity to act.<sup>108</sup>

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the consequent American entry into the war provided that opportunity. On December 18, 1941, Congress gave the President sweeping authority to reorganize the government under terms of the First War Powers Act. This action paved the way legislatively for swift action. Furthermore, the very nature of transition from a peacetime to a wartime footing made fundamental organizational changes seem suddenly more palatable and

logical. Also, most of those likely to protest a resultant loss in stature, the various chiefs of arms and the adjutant general, were due to retire; the two not scheduled to retire would be transferred to more important positions for which they were fully qualified.<sup>109</sup>

Marshall thus chose to strike while the iron was hot. He secured rapid approval for the reorganization plan from the Secretary of War and the President. The latter then signed an executive order, putting it into effect on March 9, 1942. Marshall proceeded with a rapid, ruthless implementation for two reasons. He wanted to prevent any coherent opposition from developing before the changes were a *fait accompli*. And, amid the enormous burdens of transitioning to war, any such sweeping reorganization could be enormously disruptive if prolonged.<sup>110</sup>

The implementing circular fundamentally altered the role of the General Staff. An expanded War Plans Division (later redesignated the Operations Division, or OPD) was created to serve as Marshall's global command post; it was to have unprecedented coordinating authority across the entire General Staff to increase efficiency and responsiveness. OPD's primary functions were strategic planning and operations. It was charged with comprehensively monitoring reports and inquiries from the field, serving as a clearing house for information; with ensuring that needed responses were taken; and with following up holistically to ensure that all orders and directives, internal and outgoing, were issued and executed. In short, the Operations Division was in itself a self-contained, mini-General Staff, with the coordinating authority and panoramic overview of activities which the old General Staff was simply too fragmented in structure to exercise. The remainder of the General Staff was to be significantly reduced in size and was to focus on very broad matters of policy beyond the purview of individual subordinate commands. Across the entire General Staff, the intent ultimately was that roughly half the members should be air officers. Beyond doubt, this last measure would finally ensure an adequate level of cooperation, understanding, and

communication between air and ground officers in all aspects of plans and operations.<sup>111</sup>

The reorganization also abolished GHQ, and created three co-equal, autonomous commands to administer the Army in the Zone of the Interior (i.e., the Continental United States): the Army Ground Forces, the Army Air Forces, and the Services of Supply. All three commands reported directly to the Chief of Staff. The Commander of Army Ground Forces was responsible for all aspects of preparing ground forces to fight overseas (e.g., doctrine, equipment, organization structure, training, and schools). The Commander of Army Air Forces assumed responsibility for all air personnel, aviation equipment procurement and disposition, training, doctrine, aircraft development, specific air forces construction and supply, and all aerial operations except by units assigned to other commands. The Commander of the Services of Supply had purview over all general supply, procurement, construction, transportation, and administration matters.<sup>112</sup>

Thus, the Reorganization of March 1942 marked an achievement that Marshall had generally envisioned when he assumed office. The Army Air Forces had gained virtual autonomy within the War Department, but were more than ever an integrated part of the Army's combined-arms team. The three Zone-of-the-Interior commands relieved the General Staff and Marshall himself from a myriad of issues, which could now be worked out, for the most part, within those commands. Only issues applying to two or more commands, or too difficult to resolve at lower levels, would now percolate up to Marshall. This freed him considerably from the tyranny of detail, and enabled him to focus on matters of broad policy and strategy appropriate to his level of responsibility. Just as important, he now had a streamlined General Staff with a broader outlook to match his own. Within that Staff the Operations Division served as a center to monitor situations around the globe and as a conduit for orders and directions. Just as important to Marshall, OPD had the requisite coordinating authority to orchestrate comprehensive, rapid responses across the General Staff on important matters; it also had the charter to follow up so that nothing "fell through the cracks" due to neglect

or compartmentalized thinking within the General Staff or within subordinate headquarters.

Marshall's actions during the prewar years thus demonstrated great skill in using organizational structuring and restructuring to influence the fulfillment of his vision, as well as the reinforcement of desired institutional values. Those values—especially teamwork, responsiveness, efficiency and initiative—were promoted by the changes he instituted.

## CHAPTER 9

### STRATEGY

George Marshall, prior to becoming Chief of Staff, had acquired little direct experience in strategic planning. It is truly amazing, therefore, to analyze the remarkable transformation he underwent in this arena from 1939 until early 1942. The catalyst in this transformation was the dramatic sequence of events overseas, which portrayed an ever more aggressive Germany, Italy, and Japan increasingly threatening the existing international order.

In his first 9 months as Chief of Staff, Marshall focused almost exclusively on the ways and means to rebuild and train the American Army. His time and energies were consumed by that effort. Strategic considerations remained in the background of his attentions. At the same time, Germany had yet to fight France and Britain in Western Europe. Most Americans envisioned, at worst, a repeat of the World War I scenario, in which their country would enter a stalemated ground war on the Western Front to deliver the *coup de grace* to an exhausted foe.<sup>113</sup>

Marshall appears during this period to have largely accepted such a scenario with one key exception. He presciently felt that any American expeditionary force sent overseas would have to be fully ready to fight a campaign as soon as it landed—totally unlike Pershing's American Expeditionary Force (AEF) of World War I. This thinking permeated his arguments on behalf of a greatly expanded Army experienced in large-unit maneuvers at the corps and field army levels. He articulated those sentiments to Congress as early as November 27, 1939:

The First Division of the A.E.F. arrived in France in July 1917 and entered into intensive training, for the first time, as a division. It was not prepared to take its position in the line until the following

January, even under the forced training schedule of a unit in wartime within sound of the guns on the battle front. Fortunately, under the protection of the Allies, it was given a year in which to find itself....The future problems for our Army visualize no such protected period for overcoming peacetime military deficiencies. We must be prepared to stand on our own feet from the outset.<sup>114</sup>

### **Hemispheric Defense.**

The cataclysmic events of the spring and summer of 1940 added a new dimension to Marshall's strategic thinking—serious concern about the security of the Western Hemisphere. Some concern had existed beforehand. He had previously emphasized that one of the Army's two general missions was to "prevent the domination of territory in the Western Hemisphere by an overseas power." He had also argued that a violation of the Monroe Doctrine by European powers was "not beyond the realm of possibility." He specially regarded Nazi designs to take over Brazil and Venezuela as a credible threat; both countries had substantial German populations, which could serve as a fifth column, using subversion and sabotage to seize power under a pro-German, fascist banner. Nonetheless, such concerns had been relatively fuzzy in nature. But Germany's Blitzkrieg victories over Denmark, Norway, the Low Countries, France, and Britain now made follow-up threats to the Western Hemisphere seem much more specific and acute. It did not require much imagination to envisage a complete Axis victory in Europe, involving perhaps even the surrender or conquest of Great Britain. If the Germans thereby acquired both the French and British fleets, they would be in a position to invade the Western Hemisphere. The rapid conquest of Norway on the cheap was seen as the model for the initiation of such a campaign.<sup>115</sup>

Much of Marshall's rationale for requesting the federalization of the National Guard and the Selective Service Act in the summer of 1940 was couched in terms of hemispheric defense. His considerable efforts to upgrade defenses in the Panama Canal Zone and in the Caribbean area resulted directly from this thinking. Indeed, Marshall could hardly have advocated sending American ground troops overseas to fight, given American policy and public sentiment

to avoid involvement in another European war. Even his fuzzy hinting of such involvement a year later in his first biennial report triggered a sharp outcry.<sup>116</sup>

However, the call to bolster hemispheric defenses did provide a publicly palatable rationale for expanding air and ground forces; they had the legitimate mission to deal with a plausible contingency near to home shores—and something the Navy alone might not be able to handle, such as a fascist coup in Brazil or even Panama. In this regard, the popular sentiments surrounding the Monroe Doctrine were extremely supportive. Even for mainstream isolationist thought, hemispheric security seemed a logical extension of the notion of self-defense, unlikely to stir up the fundamental fear of foreign entanglements. Yet, unlike defense at America's shores, hemispheric security required the ability to project forces—land, sea, and air—to defeat incursions and to man crucial outposts such as the Panama Canal.<sup>117</sup>

Despite his belief in likely threats to the hemisphere, Marshall continued quietly in his thinking that America could well get directly involved in the European war. He did not, however, at this point see such involvement as inevitable. Nonetheless, he proceeded to plan further mobilization efforts with this kind of involvement in mind, as a sort of worst-case scenario.

### **"Europe First."**

Marshall also began to direct increasing attention to war planning. The Navy's preferred orientation in previous planning had focused on the Pacific, specifically involving war with Japan. And, indeed, the Japanese in the fall of 1940 seemed determined to pursue a course of regional hegemony which put them on a collision course with America. In September, they occupied northern Indochina and announced joining the Rome-Berlin Axis. The likelihood of a two-theater war now loomed larger than ever before.<sup>118</sup>

Marshall's resultant thinking began to coalesce around the concept that in such a two-theater war, the priority of U.S. interests lay in the Atlantic and in Europe. He articulated this

view increasingly in broader planning circles. Within a relatively short span of time, both he and Admiral Stark were in full agreement on the issue. When Stark published a comprehensive strategic analysis in November 1940 recommending a Europe-first strategy, Marshall threw his complete support behind it. Together, he and Stark convinced the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of War, and the President to accept it in principle by January 1941.<sup>119</sup>

The supporting assertion was the recognition that America's security rested to a very large extent on the fate of Great Britain. Stark argued in his analysis that "...if Britain wins decisively against Germany we could win everywhere; but that if she loses the problems confronting us would be very great; and while we might not *lose everywhere*, we might, possibly, not *win* anywhere." if Great Britain collapsed, the victorious Axis powers would eventually seek expansion, first economically and then militarily, into the Western Hemisphere. Thus, Britain must be assisted in every possible way. An all-out simultaneous war against Japan in the Pacific would draw essential resources away from the more critical effort in Europe. Even Japan's defeat would not contribute significantly to the more important objectives of defending the Western Hemisphere and preserving Great Britain. The conclusion drawn was that in a two-theater war the United States could "do little more in the Pacific than remain on a strict defensive." Also embedded in the analysis was the assessment that Great Britain had neither the manpower nor materiel to defeat Germany alone; the assistance of powerful allies would ultimately be required; furthermore, blockade and air bombardment, the means favored by the British, would be inadequate by themselves to resolve the war. The only certain way to defeat Germany was "by military success on shore." This would require the United States to send large land and air forces to participate in a great land offensive.<sup>120</sup>

Thus, Marshall and his naval counterpart played the leading roles in both developing and selling the "Germany-first" approach which became the centerpiece of American strategy during World War II. The British supported this approach in the ensuing secret British-American staff conferences in



Washington, January-March 1941. A few months later, the Joint Board completed RAINBOW 5, the umbrella plan which outlined the objectives and missions of American forces in a two-theater, Germany-first war.<sup>121</sup>

### **Strategic Unity Of Command.**

Shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack and America's consequent entry in the war, the leaders of Great Britain and the United States assembled in Washington for a conference, christened Arcadia. Meeting from December 22, 1941 until January 14, 1942, these leaders attempted to identify and come to grips with the fundamental issues surrounding their new Allied relationship. Quickly, they confirmed the Germany-first approach and went on to deal with a host of related issues.

Then, on Christmas Day, while discussing the disposition of reinforcements en route to the Southwest Pacific area, Marshall stunned all present. As a result of his World War I experience, he asserted "that the most important consideration is the question of unity of command....I am convinced that there must be one man in command of the entire theater—air, ground, and ships. We cannot manage by cooperation....If we make a plan for unified command now, it will solve nine-tenths of our troubles." He continued, saying that the one man in control would operate under a charter, or "controlled directive," supplemented as necessary with additional guidance, issued by the military service chiefs of Britain and the United States. He continued:

We had to come to this in the first World War, but it was not until 1918 that it was accomplished and much valuable blood, and treasure had been needlessly sacrificed. If we could decide on a unified command now, it would be a great advance over what was accomplished during the World War.<sup>122</sup>

The initial reaction by all present was negative. Neither Admiral Stark nor Admiral King, the Commander of the U.S. Fleet, rallied to his support. The issue was delicately tabled for the rest of the meeting.

But Marshall persisted. At the next meeting, he showed up with draft sample orders to a theater commander. Now the group had something concrete to examine and discuss. The document was in the form of a letter of instructions, defining the mission, and the authority granted. It also excluded from his authority any interference in matters which were strictly the business of any particular government; this assured all present that no real risk was involved to the interests of any Allied power. He next suggested that the Far Eastern Theater be the first so organized; he named this theater ABDA, an acronym for Australian, British, Dutch, and American. As a sweetener, Marshall suggested that a British general, Sir Archibald Wavell, be named supreme commander.<sup>123</sup>

The next day, after extensive discussion, Marshall convinced the President, as well as Admirals Stark and King, to support the proposal. Finally, after extensive debates and behind-the-scenes lobbying, he personally convinced a very reluctant Churchill and the British chiefs of staff to accede. This approach, applied initially only to ABDA, was intended as the eventual command model for all theaters of war.<sup>124</sup>

### **The Combined Chiefs of Staff.**

Marshall then threw his full support behind a British proposal for the composition and organization of the Allied council which would give the theater supreme commanders their directives. He quickly garnered support from the President, as well as from Admirals Stark and King. This council, to be known as the Combined Chiefs of Staff, would consist of the British Chiefs of Staff and their American counterparts; it would report collectively to the President and the Prime Minister. Furthermore, the seat of the Combined Chiefs would be in Washington; the British would station a Joint Staff Mission there to represent their chiefs of staff in regular meetings with their American counterparts. Making Washington the single seat of the Combined Chiefs of Staff was also the result of Marshall's insistence. The original proposal had called for two co-equal seats, Washington and London, an arrangement less likely to produce the unity of effort and unity of command Marshall sought.<sup>125</sup>

Marshall's performance during the Arcadia Conference left a deep impression. Like a man possessed, he had pursued the concept of unity of command in theaters of war, exercised through supreme commanders answering to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. He articulately pleaded the case, gradually winning broad acceptance. In so doing, he played the undisputed leading role in providing the Allies with an effective instrument for close cooperation, unity of effort, and strategy formulation virtually unprecedented in scope and magnitude.

In the process, Marshall established himself as a diplomatic but forceful personality. He emerged from the Arcadia Conference as the chief American spokesman, the *primus inter pares*, of the U.S. military representatives. Over time, he would achieve the same status among the Combined Chiefs of Staff as a whole.<sup>126</sup>

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **CONCLUSION**

During his prewar years as Chief of Staff, George Marshall was concerned primarily with the challenge of preparing the Army for war. Events in Europe made the eventual commitment there of American ground forces very imaginable for him, although the specific conditions and situations of such a commitment were ambiguous. Driven by his own poignant experiences from World War I, Marshall determined that the Army must be ready to fight coherently in large formations as polished, combined-arms teams when the war began. This meant as well that all modern supplies and equipment, in addition to a warm, functioning industrial base to support sustainment and expansion, had to be on hand from the onset. His strategic vision thus revolved around the efforts comprehensively to expand and upgrade the Army during this period. With the Army's small size, its inadequate level of training, its obsolescent equipment, its virtually nonexistent military industrial base, its underdeveloped Air Corps, and its anachronistic War Department organization, the tasks associated with implementing this vision seemed staggering. They consumed the great bulk of his time and energies from 1939 through 1941.

Given the generally unsympathetic attitude in Washington and around the country in 1939 toward any steps which smacked of involvement in another European ground war, Marshall's achievements over the next 2 1/2 years were truly remarkable.

Without question, Marshall's actions addressed in a particularly impressive way all aspects of strategic leadership which were abstractly postulated at the beginning of this report. He developed, articulated, and followed a vision which served as the enduring road map for himself and the Army. In the process of implementing his vision, he demonstrated

extremely adept interpersonal talents. In this regard, his ability to persuade diverse groups, to develop networks of influential contacts, and to make timely compromises was critically important. In connection with, and in support of, his vision, he strongly promoted certain crucial values across the Army as an institution—namely, efficiency, responsiveness, teamwork, initiative, and morale.

In addition, he consistently revealed an indepth understanding of the derivative effects of actions, as well as of a related keen awareness of the timing associated with execution. His means of gaining feedback from the Army at large were effective—ranging from his many, frequent inspection trips, to the broad use of his Inspector General, to his copious, direct correspondence with subordinate commanders. Marshall definitely kept his fingers on the pulse of the Army as it expanded.

While so doing, he rapidly advanced a whole new leadership generation into the general officer ranks, based on demonstrated skills, adherence to institutional values, and potential for increased responsibility. By and large, these young leaders covered themselves with distinction during the ensuing war years, and well beyond.

Marshall's strategic leadership was also manifested by the fashion in which he progressively evolved the War Department's organizational structure to reflect both his vision and his desired institutional values. This evolution itself comprised an insightful lesson in the art of the possible and the timing of related actions.

In the realm of strategy formulation, he played a central role in shaping the acceptance of the "Germany-first" approach as the linchpin of American wartime strategy. He went on to play the central role in formulating the highly successful Anglo-American wartime structure at a very formative point in the Alliance. The employment of theater supreme commanders reporting back through the Combined Chiefs of Staff to the President and the Prime Minister was clearly a creature of his making; it was adopted only because he doggedly persisted without much encouragement in pursuing

the concept. Some authors have gone so far as to characterize the acceptance of this setup as the single most important strategic contribution of the war—a necessary prerequisite for the unprecedented unity of command which undergirded subsequent Allied success.

George Marshall clearly made a difference. He started out in 1939 as a relative unknown in Washington circles and emerged 2 1/2 years later as one of this nation's better known and influential figures. He had to face squarely many unpopular issues which politicians of all types just didn't want to handle. Yet, he persisted in focusing attention on them, articulating the Army's needs relative to them, and forcing politicians over and over again to view the issues in a different light—the nonpolitical perspective of national security. To be sure, Marshall was helped repeatedly by developments abroad. But all his fights still remained uphill ones against the odds. In this connection, it is hard to imagine America being as ready for World War II as it was without the yeoman efforts of its Army Chief of Staff. Marshall and Marshall alone made the federalization of the National Guard and the Selective Service Act realities in 1940. Again, he alone engineered the term of service extensions for the National Guardsmen, Reserve officers, and inductees in 1941, an act which kept a coherent force from disintegrating completely. Marshall made the autonomy of the Army Air Forces a reality while ensuring that air and ground forces formed a better combined-arms team. He pushed hard for a firm organizational structure to reflect Anglo-American adherence to an unprecedented degree of Allied unity of command. All these results had an important and lasting impact on this country's later performance in the war. These achievements appear impressive in retrospect. They appear truly monumental looking forward from the perspective of 1939. Unquestionably, they alone place George Marshall among the great American strategic leaders of this century.

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